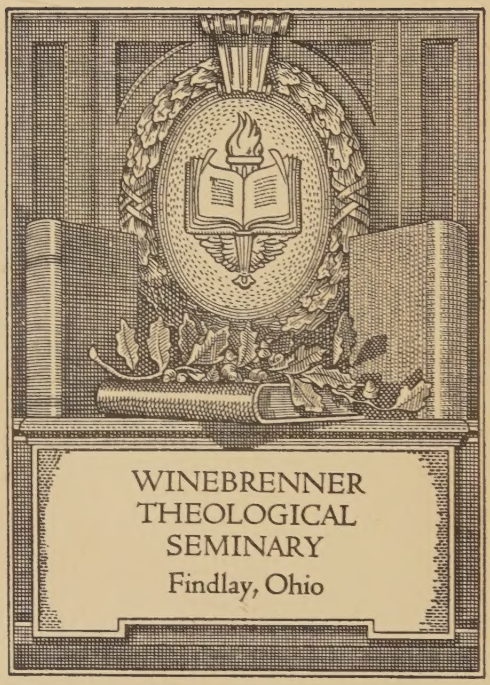
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WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM.

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HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

A Review of The Principal Doctrinal Discussions
In The Christian Church Since
The Apostolic Age

by

WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM, D.D.

[2 vols]

VOL. I

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"The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us nor forsake us."
1 KINGS 8.57.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

A Sketch of
William Cunningham and James Bannerman*

At the beginning of the 19th century, weakness, slumber and death almost universally characterized the pulpits of the Church of Scotland. A scattered evangelical remnant still remained within her ranks, but for more than half a century they had struggled unsuccessfully to turn back the tide of Moderatism and worldliness which had entered the national church early in the 18th century. The religion of the Moderates, as the prevailing clerical party was called, was a cold appeal to virtue and morality accompanied by a lordly contempt of the evangelical message and fervour. Their only article of faith seemed to be that God existed for the benefit of man. The godly, but somewhat eccentric, Dr. Kidd (1761-1834) of Aberdeen, on being called to preach at the ordination of a student in the presence of his predominantly Moderate Presbytery, once delivered a perfect satire directed at the typical clergyman of the day. "My young brother," he began, "you have now been set apart to the office of the holy ministry. Whatever you do, be sure that you don't overwork yourself. Why should you die before your time? There are some foolish people, as you may be aware, who go in for Sabbath schools, prayer meetings, and Bible classes; but, my beloved young brother, I counsel you carefully to avoid all that sort of nonsense! . . ."

In the previous century the Erskines and Boston had raised an unheeded warning against this natural religion and by the end of that century a full third of the Scottish people had ceased to listen to the men who stood in the pulpits once occupied by Reformers and martyrs. This was Scotland's condition in 1800. Yet by the 1840's such was the spiritual transformation that an unbiased English observer like C. H. Waller, once examining chaplain to Bishop Ryle and Principal of the London School of Divinity, could describe the revived Scottish Church, "The Free Church," as the nearest approach that he knew in the history of the Church universal to Apostolic conditions of faith and living. It is the movement which resulted in that transformation which we refer to as "The Third Reformation," and we shall be particularly interested in the part played by the two men whose best works are shortly to be republished.

Within a short span of years three events occurred which marked the beginnings of this new and better day. The first was the birth of

* As the authors of the first two reprints in this *Students' Reformed Library* were so closely associated, their lives are here recorded together.

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a succession of infants whose names were later to be revered all over the land—James Buchanan in 1804, William Cunningham in 1805, R. S. Candlish in 1806, James Bannerman in 1807 and James Begg in 1808.[1] The second notable event immediately followed: it was the conversion in 1809 of the minister of the obscure parish of Kilmany in Fifeshire. His name was Thomas Chalmers. For seven years he had been in the ministry, absorbed in mathematical and scientific studies and pursuing his literary ambitions. The truth is, Chalmers had been a typical Moderate. He once well earned the comment of one of his more godly parishioners who used to visit the manse—"I find you aye busy, sir, with one thing or another, but come when I may, I never find you at your studies for the Sabbath."[2] "Oh, an hour or two on the Saturday evening is quite enough for that," Chalmers would reply, and his public prayers for the deliverance of adherents to "fanaticism" had made it quite plain where he stood. But the year just mentioned saw the minister of Kilmany laid low with a serious illness. In the long confinement which followed he was awakened to the nothingness of time and the magnitude of eternity, and when once more restored to his pulpit there was a "sense of seriousness unfelt before; and the world to come cast an awful shadow over every sermon." For three years Chalmers shut himself up to the study of his New Testament. His Bible was now constantly in his hands, so that his visiting friend was made to exclaim, "I never come in now, sir, but I find you aye at your Bible." To which Chalmers solemnly replied, "All too little, John, all too little."

The third event marking the commencement of this spiritual movement was the publication of a book in 1811. It was the biography of John Knox by Thomas M'Crie. All over Scotland this work was used to revive the memory of the great Reformer and nothing could have been a more telling protest against the stifling influence of Moderatism. It brought many a student and minister into the experience once described by James Fraser of Brea in his *Memoirs*: "When I read Knox, I thought I saw another scheme of divinity, much more agreeable to the Scriptures and to my experience than the modern." M'Crie followed this up in 1819 with a biography of Knox's great successor, Andrew Melville, and these two books became justly known as the "Iliad and Odyssey of the Scottish Church." Just as Homer's heroes fired the hearts of many imitators so M'Crie's biographies aroused a holy ambition in many to follow the noble example of these two spiritual giants.

[1] This list could be easily extended: e.g. Horatius Bonar was born in 1808, A. Moody Stuart in 1809, Andrew Bonar in 1810, R. M. M'Cheyne in 1813, George Smeaton in 1814. All these men were greatly used in their day.

[2] *Memoirs of Thomas Chalmers*, William Hanna, vol. i, p. 262.

Nor was Thomas M'Crie alone in raising his pen for the cause of truth. In 1810 Andrew Thomson, at the age of thirty-one, commenced his ministry in Edinburgh and at the same time he originated the *Christian Instructor*, a periodical which soon carried the evangelical message into ten thousand Scottish families and spoke to the heart and conscience of the nation. Thomson's powerful leadership rallied the scattered evangelicals and slowly the tide began to turn.

In 1815 Chalmers left the quiet of his Fifeshire parish to minister with burning eloquence and stupendous energy in the midst of Glasgow's perishing thousands. It was said that the fame of some of his sermons "shot through the educated mind not only of Glasgow, but of Scotland and of Britain, with the rapidity of lightning. He gave the evangelical movement commanding literary position, abounding hopefulness of tone, and the impetus of aggression which in every crisis is half the victory." Chalmers became Professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrew's in 1823 and three hundred students had passed through his classes before he left in 1828 to take up the greatest work of his life—his Professorship of Theology at Edinburgh.

Nothing could have been more timely than Chalmers's arrival in the Divinity Hall of the Scottish capital. Some five years earlier "the Spirit had been poured out on the students of the Edinburgh Divinity Hall,"[1] but none of their professors ventured to give them sympathy or leadership till the advent of Chalmers. His arrival added a new force to the spiritual work already begun and it was a token of what was to come when Chalmers finished his first lecture —lasting an hour and three-quarters—with a rousing appeal for the necessity of emotion and feeling in the contemplation of divine truth. Amongst the students who crowded the benches on that cold morning of November 6th, 1828, were two whose births had occurred in the years when Chalmers was still the dead Moderate of Kilmany. They were William Cunningham and James Bannerman. "It is impossible," wrote the former after that memorable day, "not to indulge the hope that the time to favour our Zion, yea, the set time, is come."[2]

William Cunningham was the son of a merchant of Hamilton, but following the early death of his father, his mother moved their home to Lesmahagow and eventually to Dunse, in Berwickshire; in these two places Cunningham was educated. His mother's family were descended from the Covenanting Pedens and men saw in young

[1] "Sketch of William Cunningham," by John J. Bonar in *Disruption Worthies*, p. 137.

[2] *Life of William Cunningham*, James MacKenzie and Robert Rainy, p. 36. This is the standard biography though disappointing in some respects.

William Cunningham the same massive build and fearless spirit that had once characterized his famous ancestor, Alexander Peden. In 1820 Cunningham began his course for the ministry by entering Edinburgh University, but his interests were clearly literary rather than spiritual in his first three years, which is hardly surprising as Moderatism had been the religion of his upbringing. Yet before the end of his third year there was born within him a sense of spiritual need and he waited earnestly on the Moderate preachers of Edinburgh for a knowledge of how a lost sinner might be saved. He waited in vain, and not until he sat under the ministry of the saintly Dr. Robert Gordon did he enter into the liberty of the Gospel. After his return home the following vacation, while dining with his uncle, the minister of Dunse, the subject of evangelical preaching was raised in a disparaging manner. To the astonishment and mortification of the uncle such remarks instead of arousing Cunningham's approval met with his calm declaration, "I have made trial of all the Moderate clergy in Edinburgh, and from not one of them could I learn what must a man do to be saved!" The great turning point had been reached and henceforth, renouncing his hereditary creed, Cunningham stood for the defence and proclamation of the Gospel.

James Bannerman was born in the manse at Cargill, Perthshire, his ancestors having been ministers in the Church of Scotland since at least the beginning of the 18th century. Deprived of his father while still a baby, he was educated at Perth Academy and subsequently entered Edinburgh University in 1822.[1] Bannerman was apparently the possessor of saving faith at an early age. It is an interesting fact that the same man who was instrumental in Cunningham's conversion was also a powerful influence in Bannerman's early life, for Dr. Robert Gordon had been the Mathematical Assistant at Perth Academy during his school days. Whether or not the mutual esteem of the two students for Dr. Gordon was a means of bringing them together we do not know, but it is clear that by the time of Chalmers's arrival in 1828 the two were intimate friends and leaders in the group of young men who were nicknamed the "Coterie."

The characteristics of Cunningham's future life were already in evidence in his student days. Nothing could exhaust his enormous appetite for study and he was never satisfied with a superficial view of any subject. In his first six years at Edinburgh he read and carefully classified 530 distinct volumes, not to mention pamphlets or magazines! And his zeal matched his thoroughness. One friend recalled how he would bring his essays round to their home and

[1] Sketch of James Bannerman by J. R. Omond in *Disruption Worthies*.

deliver them with such vehemence and gesticulations to his little fireside audience that once the family's mother had to interrupt the scene with the exclamation, "Willie, Willie, if you go on at that rate in the pulpit, you'll knock all the dust out, and blind the poor old bodies sitting below!" In the student debating societies Cunningham was more than a match for any adversary. Dr. Alexander Duff, the heroic missionary to India, tells us how, visiting Edinburgh in 1828, he was drawn by curiosity to attend a meeting of theological students where the burning issue of "Catholic Emancipation" was to be debated. "After several speakers had addressed the meeting, one rose up, taller than his fellows, with a head which, once seen, left an indelible impression on the mind. His speech was as remarkable as his personal appearance. Fraught with varied information, closely argumentative in its style, sharp in repartee, terrible in invective, merciless in its exposure of fallacies, and yet translucently clear in expression, without any flowers of rhetoric—it evidently produced a deep impression. With eager anxiety I asked for the name. It was 'Mr. Cunningham' who was then 'finishing his studies at the Hall.' 'Well, well,' was my involuntary exclamation, 'if that man lives, he will, in debate and controversy, be another Dr. Andrew Thomson.' "[1]

Cunningham was licensed to preach the Gospel at the end of 1828 and a year later he was called to his first charge in Greenock where he became the assistant of an elderly minister. "A stirring seaport town of the busy Clyde," comment his biographers, "seemed a place ill adapted for a man whose tastes lay so decidedly in the direction of books and study; yet Providence had sent him thither as to a school, where all unconsciously, he was prepared for the great work of his life." J. J. Bonar, Cunningham's friend of student days, gives us the information that, "It was to meet a sudden exigency of impatient Revivalism that had occurred in the west of Scotland—first in the form of sentimental Arminianism, but which eventually developed into mischievous Pelagianism—that Dr. Cunningham was brought to Greenock."[2] The fact is that Greenock was caught up in the commotion caused by John Campbell, minister of Row in Dumbartonshire, whose proclamation of the love of God had degenerated into a theology of universal redemption and universal pardon. At the same time there was an outbreak of "phenomena," such as the alleged possession of gifts of tongues and healings. Many a young minister would have been nonplussed by such a situation, but Cunningham, as his elders had foreseen, was equal to the task and the controversy drew out all his latent powers. He was convinced

[1] *Life of William Cunningham*, p. 40.
[2] *Sermons from 1828 to 1860 by William Cunningham*, edited by J. J. Bonar, p. xxv.

that "there was a perilous tendency in the views then current" and his handling of these errors was marked with conspicuous success. His method was the positive one of preaching the pure Gospel and, in pursuing the conversion of souls as his aim, he was well rewarded.

Meanwhile, in the nation at large the evangelical movement was strengthening its ranks every year. In the General Assembly of the Church[1] Andrew Thomson had become a hammer which dealt the Moderates many a blow and "Tamson's Men," as the evangelicals were sometimes called, were preparing for the day when they could sweep out the corruptions of a hundred years and restore the Church to her former purity. But on February 9th, 1831, their hopes were staggered when Thomson, still in the prime of life, fell dead on the doorstep of his house in Edinburgh! It was a heavy loss, but in the event it helped to teach men that "there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (1 Sam. xiv. 6).

In the General Assembly of the following year the evangelicals launched their first major attempt at reform by raising the subject of patronage. This subject concerned the settling of ministers in churches. According to the original constitution of the Church of Scotland no minister could be settled in a charge without the consent of the majority of his parishioners, but, since the Patronage Act inspired by Queen Anne early in the 18th century, the people's call had largely become a mere formality and the "patrons" had acquired the power to impose whatever men they liked upon a congregation. Such a scheme served the interests of Moderatism well —for the common people bore little love to the Moderate clergy and many a Moderate thus owed his living solely to the favour of his patron. It can therefore be appreciated that any attempt at reforming the evil of patronage was likely to meet severe opposition and it is not surprising that the most talented of the Moderates came to the fore to meet this challenge to their authority in the 1832 Assembly. In reply to an imposing display of eloquence on behalf of patronage, including speeches by the Lord Justice-Clerk Boyle and Principal Macfarlane, "there arose, amid the questioning amazement of the Assembly, an exceedingly young man, with keen, bright, imperturbably self-confident face, whom the few who knew him named to their whispering neighbours as the Rev. James Begg, of Paisley. That a man of twenty-three, on his first appearance in the Assembly, should take a prominent part in a leading debate, and should enter the lists against giants like Boyle and Macfarlane, was

[1] In the Presbyterian form of Church government particular churches are grouped together in Presbyteries which in turn are subject to a General Assembly. At the latter, the Church's policy is determined by the votes of ministers and elders equally chosen to represent their Presbyteries. The General Assembly was thus the arena in which decisive battles had to be fought. It met annually.

a thing unheard of."[1] Many a beholder of this unusual sight thought that Begg would soon stammer himself into confusion, but instead, by the lucidity and forcefulness of his arguments and with a trace of sarcastic pungency, he so captivated his august hearers that Chalmers even clapped his hands and laughed in delight! "Begg rose unknown, and sat down famous." The Moderates won the debate by a majority of forty-two but there was good cause for forebodings in their ranks. Those who had eyes to see realized the significance of what had occurred. For Begg was but the vanguard of a new generation, they had only won a preliminary skirmish—whether they could preserve their position when Begg's associates took the field was another matter.

It was not long before such fears proved justified. The Assembly of the following year was held in a memorable spot—the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh. Within these walls Knox's voice had once thundered, here Regent Murray lay buried and here also Janet Geddes had hurled "the stool that levelled a King's throne."[2] Once more the evangelicals pressed the patronage question, once more the Moderates rallied their best speakers and once more a young man arose to deliver a historic speech. Like Begg he was a newcomer to the Assembly's debates, but his tall figure and mass of curly hair quickly identified him as "Cunningham of Greenock." When he sat down again two hours later there was no mistaking the feelings of the Moderates. "That's Andrew come back," exclaimed one! Others were forced to think of young George Gillespie of the 17th century, who, having just arrived in London, in riding boots and with whip still in hand, delivered such a speech in the Westminster Assembly that his opponent the great Selden declared: "This young man, by a single speech, has swept away the learning and labour of my life!" "Those who heard Cunningham's speech that day," write his biographers, "speak of it with wonder to this day. Such power, wealth, and precision of language they had never heard." The Moderates, nevertheless, still won the debate, but now it was only with a majority of twelve. They were fighting a losing cause and it was clearly but a question of time before their day of despotic power would reach its end.

[1] *The Free Church of Scotland*, Peter Bayne, p. 55.

[2] Janet Geddes' stool, thrown at the Dean of Edinburgh in the High Church of St. Giles on July 23rd, 1637, to interrupt the reading of Archbishop Laud's obnoxious liturgy, touched off a tumult which spread all over the land and eventually brought Scotland to aid the English Parliament in defeating Charles I.

II

WERE we able to turn the clock back and walk the streets of Edinburgh as they were in the 1830's, we should see beneath us as we crossed the North Bridge, not the present railway lines but the roof of Trinity College Church. Standing in the heart of the "Old Town", in the valley between the High Street and Princes Street, this noble Gothic building had witnessed the passing events of some four centuries. In 1560, the year which marked the national acceptance of the First Reformation, the walls were already bearing the marks of age. There it was still in 1638, when the Second Reformation gave back to the Scottish Church her Scriptural purity and power. Now, two hundred years later, it was to see one more Reformation before its ancient walls were finally demolished.

When the pulpit of Trinity College Church became vacant in the summer of 1833, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh quickly fulfilled the vow he had made on hearing Cunningham's famous General Assembly speech a few months earlier, "If a vacancy occurs in a City charge during my term of office, that young man shall have it!" So, on the first Sunday of 1834, Cunningham preached his farewell sermon in Greenock and moved, at the age of twenty-eight, into one of the most responsible charges that could have been offered him.

Though it was not realized at the time, the year 1834 was the beginning of "The Ten Years Conflict," one of the most illustrious decades in Scottish history, and Cunningham's arrival in Edinburgh at such a point was no small factor in the ensuing struggle.

In the 1834 Assembly, by a majority of 184 to 139, the evangelical party carried the famous "Veto Act," whereby the right to prevent the settlement of an unacceptable minister was restored to congregations; patrons were no longer to force their personal choice upon an unwilling people, and thus the evil of patronage was swept away. At least such was the design of the Act, but when put to the test it was to lead to consequences little envisaged. Such a test came quickly, for in the summer of 1834 the church at Auchterarder became vacant and the patron's presentee was overwhelmingly

rejected by the congregation. The Presbytery accordingly refused ordination. But the matter did not stop here, and it took a decidedly serious turn when the patron and presentee challenged the legality of the "Veto Act" and appealed to the civil courts. After lengthy preliminaries a court decision was finally given in favour of the patron and against the congregation of Auchterarder early in 1838. The General Assembly, in which the evangelicals now prevailed, refused to accept this judgment and asserted that, though they were a national church and allied to the State in some respects, they were in no way subject to the civil laws when these conflicted with the laws of Christ. He alone is Head and Lawgiver in His Church.

By 1839 the whole of Scotland was aware of the struggle that was being fought out, and excitement reached a white heat in March of that year when the House of Lords endorsed the decision of the Scottish court. Would the evangelicals now give up the "Veto Act" or defy the highest tribunal in the land? These were questions which were on everyone's lips. Nor could there be any doubt that the civil courts meant to enforce their decisions. When the presentee to the parish of Lethendy was vetoed by the congregation and a second nominee accepted, the civil court by an interdict forbade the ordination of the latter. The Presbytery of Dunkeld, as commanded by the General Assembly, broke this interdict and ordained the second man. As a result they were summoned before the civil courts in June 1839 and narrowly escaped a prison sentence. It was the first time since the days of James II that ministers had been brought to the Bar for refusing to acknowledge the civil supremacy in matters spiritual. There could be no question that if the evangelicals continued in their work of reform there was going to be much suffering and self-denial.

It was just as matters were reaching this crisis that a series of powerful revivals began to occur in many parts of Scotland. In the very year when the House of Lords gave the fatal Auchterarder decision there broke out in the parish of Kilsyth on July 23 a mighty movement of the Spirit of God. This work quickly spread to other churches, such as Robert Murray M'Cheyne's in Dundee, where, throughout the autumn of that year, anxious multitudes listened to the Gospel in "an awful and breathless stillness." In 1840 there were revivals in Skye, at Tain, Tarbat, Collace, Rosskeen and elsewhere.[1] These were events which neither Moderates nor civil courts could withstand. "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God," said Elijah of old, and God did answer by fire in 1839-40. One cannot think of this fact without recalling a striking parallel in the 17th

[1] *Cf.* The chapter on "Religious Revival a Preparation" in Thomas Brown's *Annals of The Disruption*, 1884.

century. The turning point in the struggle which preceded the Second Reformation of 1638 was the outpouring of the Spirit of God which took place in various parts of Scotland from about 1625 onwards. Before that date the evangelicals had been fighting with their backs to the wall; after it they went from strength to strength. The Church has resources at her side which the world knows nothing of! "The eye that is lifted up to God in faith," wrote Bannerman in 1840, "and looking beyond the darkness that covers the field of our present contendings here below, will be enabled to discern the horse and chariots of fire round about the Church of our fathers."

There is a lesson connected with the place the revivals of 1839-40 played in "The Third Reformation," which we must pause to consider. It is sometimes thought that revivals and reformations are two quite distinct things, and in some respects that is correct. Revivals relate to an inward quickening of life within the Church and to a resultant ingathering of souls. They are occasioned solely by the operations of the Holy Spirit and their influences are primarily *internal*—upon the hearts and souls of men. Reformations, on the other hand, mean the bringing back of the Church to the Word of God and a casting off of practices not according to that rule. They concern the carrying out of duties affecting the *outward* life of the Church. Now revivals may occur without an accompanying outward reformation of the Church and when they do, as in the 18th century, the emphasis is more or less exclusively confined to evangelism and holiness. But historically it can be established that reformations never occur without revivals, which is not surprising for although reform is the Church's constant responsibility it is only as she is awakened and encouraged in this duty by the powerful operations of the Spirit of God that reformations are accomplished. It is this latter fact which is often forgotten. Because in reformations the emphasis is centred on a restoration of the Word of God, it inevitably means controversy and the prominence of questions involving theology and doctrine; the immediate question is no longer that of saving souls, for even higher issues are involved. Nevertheless, reformations are equally the work of the Holy Spirit and they are ever accompanied by the salvation of souls and the promotion of holiness.

All too often theological controversy has been regarded as inimical to revivals and spiritual prosperity. But the truth is that it is often when debate and contention are at their height that the Spirit of God descends in power among His people. Never was there greater theological turmoil in Scotland than in 1839. Commenting on this fact, Thomas Brown in his *Annals of the Disruption* rightly

observed, "Experience everywhere shows that the Church has far more to dread from the quiescent indifference of peaceful worldly times than from the shock of controversy quickening the intellectual activities of men."[1] When visiting this country the late Dr. Gresham Machen once spoke very aptly on this point. "Men say," he observed, "that instead of engaging in controversy in the Church, we ought to pray to God for a revival; instead of polemics, we ought to have evangelism. Well, what kind of revival do you think that will be? What sort of evangelism is it that is indifferent to the question what evangel is it that is to be preached? Not a revival in the New Testament sense. . . . *Every true revival is born in controversy, and leads to more controversy.* That has been true ever since our Lord said that He came not to bring peace upon the earth but a sword. And do you know what I think will happen when God sends a new Reformation upon the Church? We cannot tell when that blessed day will come, but I think we can say at least one result that it will bring. We shall hear nothing on that day about the evils of controversy in the Church. All that will be swept away as with a mighty flood. A man who is on fire with a message never talks in that wretched, feeble way, but proclaims the truth joyously and fearlessly, in the presence of every high thing that is lifted up against the Gospel of Christ."

It was also in the memorable year 1839 that James Bannerman first began to become a public figure in the life of the Church. No biography of him was ever written and the details of his life following his student days with Cunningham are very meagre. We know that after being licensed to preach the Gospel by the Presbytery of Perth in January 1830 he became minister of Ormiston in August 1833. In this secluded Midlothian village, not many miles south-east of Edinburgh, Bannerman laboured with great acceptance. From the precious volume of his sermons published posthumously in 1869 we can see the fine evangelical fare upon which his people were nourished. It was in the winter of 1839, when the church was going from one crisis to another, that the Strathbogie case came into prominence, and this was the means of bringing Bannerman to the fore. The case was similar to the Auchterarder and Lethendy incidents, but this time the Presbytery, which was predominantly Moderate, obeyed the civil courts instead of the General Assembly and ordained the patron's presentee despite the protests of the people. Whereupon the Assembly took the startling step of suspending (subsequently deposing) the seven Moderate ministers involved and appointed a Special Commission to arrange for the preaching of the Gospel in the dead parishes of the suspended

[1] P. 190.

ministers. James Bannerman was given the responsible office of Convenor of this Commission, and, despite an interdict of the civil courts to prohibit the preaching of any other ministers in these parishes, he saw to it that relays of some of the best men in Scotland, such as M'Cheyne, Dr. M'Donald and William Cunningham, were sent there to proclaim the Word of life.

Soon after this, in 1841, Bannerman had an almost equally arduous duty to perform in carrying to a conclusion the heresy case against Wright of Borthwick—an able minister but one whose writings were deeply tinged with error. Long afterwards a contemporary of Bannerman's recalled the event in these words: "No one who witnessed it will soon forget a scene which took place in the General Assembly on the night when Mr. Wright was deposed. Mr. John Inglis, advocate, now the Lord President of the Court of Session, delivered a long, elaborate and somewhat pretentious pleading for the accused. After him, Mr. Bannerman rose, and in five minutes' speaking prostrated him with such an overthrow as has seldom been seen in that House."[1]

We cannot here narrate how "The Ten Years Conflict" at length reached its momentous conclusion in the Disruption of 1843, nor how, in debate after debate, William Cunningham, "like one of those mighty steamers on the Clyde, to which all the craft in the river pay homage by getting out of their way," confounded his opponents by the "immense momentum" of his speeches. It was Cunningham who, it was said,[2] nerved Chalmers to reject the Lords decision in 1839; it was he who wrote such a reply to the Moderate James Robertson of Ellon that the latter's "laboured argument collapsed in ruins"; it was he whose speech on the deposition of the Strathbogie ministers brought over Hugh Martin to the evangelical ranks; and it was he who finally, in the Assembly of 1842, secured a majority for the total abolition of patronage. But by that year it was becoming sadly apparent that these reforms could never be truly carried out while the evangelicals remained within the bounds of a church whose authority was being unjustly limited by the civil power. Only one way was open to preserve the honour of Christ as sole Head of the Church, and that was taken on May 18th, 1843, when the evangelicals rose in the General Assembly and, bidding their final farewell to the Moderates, severed their connection with the Established Church of Scotland. It had been thought that not more than sixty or seventy would take such a final step, but when the whole party "rose in a mass and began to move toward the

[1] *Cf.* The tribute to the late Professor Bannerman in *The Free Church Record*, May 1868.

[2] *The Church History of Scotland*, John Cunningham, Vol. II, p. 479.

door, there was profound astonishment, dismay, even alarm." No less than 451 ministers seceded and immediately formed themselves into the Free Church of Scotland. The cost involved was enormous. The buildings they had preached in for years were immediately closed against them; the manses they had grown to love had at once to be vacated—places entwined with the precious memories of past years and in some cases where the mortal remains of wife or little ones lay buried. Cunningham's voice was to be heard no more from the pulpit of Trinity College Church nor Bannerman's within the walls of Ormiston Parish Church.[1] It was a sorrowful day, yet a glorious one. Principle had triumphed over expediency, Scripture over human laws, and the whole of Scotland was confronted with the example of men who were prepared to suffer for Christ and His Word.

There were many heavy demands upon the new Free Church, not least the necessity of building some 800 churches, but they allowed nothing to delay the provision of a "New College" where men could be soundly trained in the Reformed Faith. Drs. Chalmers and Welsh by seceding from the Established Church had automatically terminated their posts in the Edinburgh Divinity Hall; they naturally became the first professors in the Free Church College, and William Cunningham and the godly John Duncan were immediately appointed as their colleagues. On the death of Welsh, in 1845, Cunningham was given the post of Professor of Church History, and two years later, on Chalmers' death, he became Principal of the College. There thus devolved on his shoulders perhaps the heaviest burden of all—the responsibility of raising a faithful Gospel ministry. In this labour he rejoiced to be reunited with his old friend James Bannerman, who became Professor of Apologetics and Pastoral Theology in 1849. Exactly twenty years had passed since they had last been together in Edinburgh, but in the intervening period they had grown to be thoroughly at one on all public questions and henceforth as trusted comrades they were inseparable. Not only did they have "many an earnest and prayerful deliberation" on the work of the College, but we also find them, for instance, touring the Continent together in the summer of 1852. That was a memorable summer in Cunningham's experience, for while they were away his baby daughter died during an epidemic and on their return he found his six-year-old son dying of the same

[1] Bannerman immediately became minister of the first Free Church in Ormiston. Cunningham, on becoming a College professor, was no longer able to hold a pastoral office, nevertheless he continued to preach as occasion arose. From first to last he preached 1,895 times, or about sixty sermons a year. Though always a valued preacher, his later preaching was said not to equal "the mighty rushing wind" of his early Greenock ministry.

disease. Cunningham's letter to Bannerman informing him of this sad news is worthy of quotation and it illustrates something of the close spiritual fellowship which existed between the two men. The following is an extract:

"My Dear Friend,—The Lord's hand lies very heavily upon me. My son Andrew, aged six years, was seized on Wednesday last with the same disease which cut off dear wee baby, and died this afternoon at half-past six. He suffered very severely, but his whole deportment, as well as his particular statements, all tended to confirm our hope that the Lord was graciously dealing with his soul. . . . When I contrast the abundant enjoyment I had while with you on the Continent, and, indeed, the abundant goodness, of all the way through which the Lord has led me, with this accumulation of sorrows, I feel that I have special reason to adopt the language of Job and to say, 'Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?' But the great matter now is to see that the evil be converted into good."[1]

In the days of Cunningham and Bannerman, New College, Edinburgh, rose to be the finest theological college in Europe. All was designed to train the mind, heart and conscience of men who were to expound the oracles of God. Along with the necessity of the highest intellectual standards, the need of moral earnestness and spirituality of mind was ever pressed home upon the students. "Many will be wishing you a happy New Year," John Duncan, Professor of Hebrew, would say to his pupils on the first lecture of a new year; "gentlemen, I wish you a happy eternity!"[2] And his hearers felt that such a wish was shared by all their lecturers. Although they might not all, as Duncan sometimes did, lecture "with the tears trickling down his cheeks," they nevertheless all spoke as men for whom to live was Christ; and while Cunningham's name will generally first be thought of in connection with theological learning, the fact is "that in urging any point of *practical duty*, his power of producing the sense of obligation—precise, inevitable, irresistible obligation—was unequalled, I think, by any Professor of his time, even by Dr. Chalmers."[3] It is an interesting sidelight on this aspect of Cunningham's work that the last article he ever wrote for *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review* was on "The Practical Application of Calvinism,"[4] and after a life which

[1] *Life of William Cunningham*, p. 394.
[2] *Recollections of the late John Duncan*, A. Moody Stuart, p. 83.
[3] *Life of William Cunningham*, p. 237.
[4] Cunningham was editor of *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review* from October 1855 to October 1860, when he passed it over to George Smeaton. This was one of the finest theological journals of the last century.

had involved much theological controversy it was typical of the spirit of the man that he was able to take for the last sermon he preached for his friend Dr. Hugh Martin, the words of 1 Peter i. 8, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

There can be no question that the large measure of success which attended the Free Church in the middle of the last century was largely connected with the training her ministers were receiving at the feet of Cunningham and his colleagues. From its origin the College was crowded, and by the time forty years had passed upwards of 1,300 students had gone through the classes.

Cunningham was Moderator of the Free Church in 1859, and in that capacity he urged upon the attention of his brethren the lessons of the revivals which were then taking place in America and Ulster. "We need," he declared in the closing words of his speech before the Assembly of that year, "and, so to speak, *must have*, the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Let it be the one great desire of our hearts that God would pour out His Spirit everywhere abundantly in connection with the preaching of the Gospel. . . . And while we are importuning God and giving Him no rest, let us again yield ourselves unto Him as alive from the dead; let us consecrate all that He has given us to His glory and service."[1] This was the last but one of the great speeches the Assembly heard from Cunningham, for already he had lost the sight of one eye and his health was noticeably failing. But he was not to leave the scene of his labours before seeing his desires at least partially fulfilled in the revivals which occurred in several parts of Scotland in 1860.

We do not often find that theological professors are conspicuous for their interest in revivals, but it was so in New College a hundred years ago. Cunningham highly valued books dealing with the subject, and had himself edited in 1842 the life and sermons of Robert Bruce, perhaps the most prominent figure in the early 17th-century revivals. We are also told how Cunningham would urge the students at New College to read such works as Jonathan Edwards' *Thoughts on the Revival in New England*. The same interest is equally true of the other professors. Dr. Moody-Stuart wrote of "Rabbi" Duncan, "Next to W. C. Burns there was perhaps scarcely any man in our church who surpassed him in a deep, abiding, life-long interest in the reviving of the work of God in the land"; and to mention but one more example, we know how the preaching of the Professor of Systematic Theology, James Buchanan, was widely used in the revivals of 1860.

[1] *Life of William Cunningham*, p. 419.

Cunningham opened the General Assembly of 1860 with a sermon on the Atonement.[1]

"This was the last sermon he ever preached," says J. J. Bonar, "and it was his greatest." He continued his lectures up to the beginning of December 1861, when he became confined to his home. On December 13th, having been told that the end was near, he sent for his old friends and colleagues Bannerman and Buchanan. After speaking to them of the foundation upon which his soul was settled long ago, and after committing to them all his papers and lectures, this moving farewell terminated as described in the following paragraph: "On being asked if he had any message to the students of the New College, in whom he took a paternal interest, he lay back for some seconds in earnest thought, and then said, 'I have no particular word for them except this, let them give themselves first to Christ, and then dedicate their whole lives to His service, seeking to be able and faithful ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the spirit.' " He then bade his colleagues affectionately farewell, and, as he grasped their hands with a cordial and prolonged pressure, repeated these lines:

> "A few short years of evil past,
> We reach that happy shore,
> Where death-divided friends at last
> Shall meet to part no more."

His last words to them, twice repeated, were, "We shall meet at the right hand." With such simple words as these upon his lips there passed on a few hours later one of the strongest and noblest sons of Scotland and one of the most illustrious divines that has ever lived since the days of the Apostle Paul.

Bannerman, while feeling the death of his friend "as an irreparable loss to the Church and as a deep personal affliction," laboured on for six winters more in the work at New College. He edited, along with James Buchanan, Cunningham's works[2] for the press, and also published in 1865 his own valuable work on *Inspiration: The Infallible Truth and Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures*. In 1867 his health began to fail rapidly, though with characteristic determination he continued his classes until shortly before his death on March 27th, 1868. When that great New England Puritan, John Cotton of Boston, reached the gates of death

[1] *Cf. Sermons from 1828 to 1860* by William Cunningham.

[2] These were published in four volumes, I, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*; II, and III, *Historical Theology*; IV, *Discussions on Church Principles*. A large volume, entitled *Theological Lectures*, was later published in 1878 at the request of his former students.

it was with joy at the prospect of being with Christ and his old friends John Preston and William Ames. Doubtless it was with similar feelings that James Bannerman exclaimed with his last breath, "Let Thy servant now depart in peace. I have waited for Thy salvation, O God!"

III

In personal characteristics Cunningham and Bannerman displayed striking similarities. Both possessed clear, massive, energetic and logical minds; both were gentle, quiet and kind in personal disposition; both devoted their lives to the clarification and advancement of the theology of the Reformation; both wrote with an exhaustive thoroughness, impressing the reader with thoughts profound yet "transparent as the ocean depths," and manifesting (in Cunningham's case to an extraordinary degree) the ability to seize leading principles and to state the essential points of difference between opposing systems of thought; both were formidable antagonists in controversy, yet they never lost that inward tenderness of spirit and that ability to sympathize which should characterize every minister of the Gospel. "A good soldier of Jesus Christ," Duncan declared of Cunningham, "who with wise and tender love for the persons of all men, used mercilessly the might which Christ had given him only against error and sin, pernicious to man as dishonouring of God."[1] Both were men so outstandingly fair and honest in controversy that even their opponents felt affection for them. When Cunningham was laid low with a dangerous illness in 1838, a "crusty doctor" of the Moderate party stopped one of the evangelicals on the street in Edinburgh to enquire for Cunningham's health. On hearing his condition was improved, the Moderate declared, "I'm happy at that. I wish we had him back again *rampagin'* among us!" Again, on the fatal Disruption Day, May 18th 1843, as the evangelicals filed out of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for the last time, it is said that Robertson of Ellon—the man whom Cunningham had so recently hammered—rose, took up a position by the door and watched till the blood left his face and he became pale with sorrow.

Cunningham's major work, his *Historical Theology*, was first delivered as lectures to the students of New College after his appointment to the Chair of Church History in 1845.[2] The work was

[1] *Cf.* the moving tribute in David Brown's *Life of John Duncan*, pp. 398-99.

[2] They were first given as a three-year course (later compressed into two years), and so great was Cunningham's exhaustion after the initial preparation and delivery that his biographer doubts whether his health ever perfectly recovered.

published posthumously in 1862. It reached a second edition in 1864 and a third in 1870. The object of the lectures, as the title suggests, was not to narrate the external history of the Christian Church, for students were expected to acquire for themselves the outlines of facts and dates, but her doctrinal history, the processes by which the great landmarks of Biblical Theology gradually became established. And this aim is not pursued in the dispassionate detachment of a mere onlooker, but, throughout, Cunningham seeks to test all by Scripture and to mark out the great deviations from the truth that have occurred in the various eras of the Church's history since the Apostolic era.

It is remarkable that, though nothing has since been written in this field in Britain which even approximates to Cunningham's work in value, these volumes have become very little known and used. The reasons are not hard to find. Cunningham's work assumed the possibility and necessity of Systematic Theology. He believed that the great doctrines of Scripture had already come to be settled in different ages (the Trinity in Athanasius' day, the Atonement in Anselm's, Justification in Luther's, etc.) and that these doctrines were all part of one organic unity. Just as some great medieval cathedral, though the work of many generations, was still one building. There is, he would have said, but *one* system of truth revealed in Scripture, and the study of Historical theology should help us to come to a clearer understanding of that system. It is true that all spiritual truth is deposited in Scripture. But just as scientists need to quarry facts and truths out of the existing universe, so the work of the Church through the ages has been to gather together the truths of Scripture and "build them into the temple of Systematic theology." Historical theology, to put it simply, is just the study of this building process.

Now, these were convictions which the later 19th century took pleasure in disclaiming. Instead of beginning with a realization that God in His providence had already caused His Church to investigate and settle at least the great majority of Biblical doctrines, the Church, flattered by the supposed possession of superior light, began to despise the old doctrinal standards and to construct a "creed" anew, as though the faith of the previous eighteen centuries counted for nothing. Nor were evangelicals free from this plague; even they took up the slogans that "Christianity is not a doctrine but a life" and that to express the truth systematically is an abuse of logic—as though to think illogically was a mark of true spirituality!

It is not surprising that, in the blundering and confusion which resulted from this new view of theology, men like Cunningham and

Bannerman were forgotten.[1] Moreover, it is not without a startling significance that the rejection of the old theology has led to the prevalence today of the very three systems which Cunningham regarded as the major obstacles to the Christian Faith. Instead of having advanced to superior heights, the Church of the 20th century is back entrenched in the very errors which were so injurious to her life centuries ago.

These three systems, the Roman,[2] the Socinian and the Arminian,[3] almost universally dominate the intellectual life of the church today. Never has Rome been stronger for four hundred years than she is at the present time in this country, and though, at first sight, there may not seem to be any connection between Socinianism and many of the features of modern liberalism, or between Arminianism and the greater part of modern evangelicalism, the connection is none the less real. As Cunningham so rightly saw, they have, again in our day, proved to be the most formidable alternatives to the Reformed Faith.

These are some of the facts which give particular importance to the republication of *Historical Theology*. For in these volumes great attention is given to the errors just mentioned, and Reformed theology, which is the only true Biblical reply to them, is set forth with masterly clarity and strength. From past controversies we are thus brought immediately into the realm of present issues and present duties.

The timeliness of the republication of Bannerman's work on *The Church of Christ* will doubtless be less apparent to most readers. The purity, government and discipline of the visible Church are matters which have in most evangelical circles generally come to be regarded as divisive and injurious questions, and any attempt to

[1] Even when J. J. Bonar published the previously mentioned volume of Cunningham's sermons in 1872 he had cause to write in his Preface, p. xii: "How far a volume, with nothing in it but the pith of Genevan Doctrine,—with nothing but the unrevised Bible and the worn-out Truth,—the obsolete Gospel and the Common Salvation,—will be appreciated or borne with in this day of contemptuous revolt from all that used to be most firmly held by the Churches, it is not easy to predict; or rather, it is too easy. Dr. Cunningham, for the splendour that surrounds his name, may get recognition; but with his Sacrificial Theology, and Forensic Justification, and Regenerative Grace, and Definite Election, it would be vain to expect that he will find a cordial welcome. It is the palatable in creed, and the brilliant in speculation, which all men are now going after as in the madness of idolatry."

[2] Cunningham's view of the potential strength of the Church of Rome contrasted sharply with the shallow optimism of many of his contemporaries. "He had," writes his biographer, Dr. Rainy, "a deep conviction that to underrate the strength and subtlety of Romish theology was a great mistake and he never hesitated to characterize it as the masterpiece of Satan."

[3] Broadly speaking, Socinianism is a system which refers the salvation of man to man himself, while Arminianism in its various forms distributes the work between God and man.

revive interest in them is regarded as a threat to evangelical co-operation and unity. This is doubtless partly the result of a reaction from the Roman heresy which elevates a false doctrine of the Church and declares that all that is required is adherence to an external organization. Over against this the Evangelical tradition has rightly brought into prominence the great doctrine of the invisible Church to which all belong who are united to Christ. But it is to be feared that this modern attitude is also to a considerable extent the outcome of indifference to the whole doctrine of the visible Church. True this doctrine may be elevated beyond its Scriptural proportion, but the prevailing evangelical tendency is rather to belittle it and treat the whole subject as though the Word of God contained no instructions regarding it. The whole question is decided by most people solely in terms of expediency. Thus with many ministers the question of which visible church they should adhere to is decided by such questions as, "In what church will I be given most freedom to evangelize?"

Now, this attitude contrasts very sharply with the view of the men who, as we have seen, paved the way in the 1830's for "The Third Reformation" in Scotland. When the evangelicals began to find their strength again, instead of confining themselves to working together for the proclamation of the Gospel, they viewed it as their urgent duty to *reform* the whole visible church to which they belonged. Hence "The Ten Years Conflict" and all which that controversy involved. They did not ask, "What is expedient?" But, "What is our duty? What do the Scriptures teach on these matters?" Consequently their path was neither easy nor comfortable, and the doctrine of the Church which they held was something that they had to suffer heavily for in 1843—even to the loss of their homes and churches. But the spiritual results that attended their faithfulness were incalculable and the attention which they gave to controversial matters, instead of quenching the Spirit, was honoured by God in those memorable revivals of 1839-40. The path of duty is the way of blessing.

It is an interesting fact that not all the evangelicals in the Church of Scotland at first shared in the views of their fellows with regard to the degree of importance that should be attached to some of the questions involved. For instance, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, who was so greatly used in the revivals of the period, tells us how, when he first settled in Dundee in 1836, he thought his "great and almost only work was to pray and preach." But later, he says, "a new light broke in upon my mind, and I saw that if preaching be an ordinance of Christ so is church discipline. I now feel very deeply persuaded, that both are of God—that two keys are committed to us by Christ;

the one the key of doctrine . . . the other the key of discipline. Both are Christ's gift, and neither are to be resigned without sin. And I am deeply persuaded that that church will flourish best, that is ruled best."[1]

M'Cheyne's personal discovery was the very same truth which was laid down by the great 16th-century leaders of Reformed Theology. They, and John Calvin in particular, saw clearly that there were two great instruments appointed by God in the New Testament for the advancement of His Kingdom; the first was the true doctrine of the Gospel, the second the pure government of the visible church.[2]

"Calvin came to the conclusion," wrote Cunningham, "that the real and effectual way of going to the root of the mischief, of eradicating from its foundation the heresy which had perverted the way of salvation, the idolatry which had corrupted the worship of the gospel, and the tyranny which had prevailed in its government, was just to go back to the Calvinism and Presbyterianism of the New Testament."[3]

In our own day, however greatly we need an evangelical revival, we need even more than that. We need another Reformation, a movement which will go "to the root of the mischief" and bring back the visible church to the pattern of God's Word in her government, ordinances and ministry. The republication of Bannerman is a step in that direction. The work raises issues which have not been faced for many a year, and while not all will agree with Bannerman's conclusions there can be no question that he presents an abundance of material which theological students and ministers would profit from reconsidering today. For those who wish to study the doctrine of the Church in its several aspects as it was held by the majority of the Reformers, Puritans, Covenanters and leaders of "The Third Reformation," it will prove an invaluable textbook.

One final word of explanation should perhaps be offered with regard to the style in which the works of Cunningham and Bannerman were written. Principal John MacLeod likens Cunningham's *Historical Theology* to the elaborate and luminous statement of a Judge at the Bench delivered to a jury of Christian students. It is a fitting simile. Just as a Judge's duty is to attend solely to the matter in hand, so Cunningham, with little regard to the form of his

[1] *A Basket of Fragments*, pp. 241-2.

[2] "Whoever studies to abolish this order and kind of government of which we speak, or disparages it as of minor importance, plots the devastation, or rather the ruin and destruction, of the Church." Calvin, *Institutes*, vol. II, p. 317.

[3] *Cf.* the extract from his speech on the lessons of the Reformation in which it was his purpose to illustrate the position that other views coming short of these might palliate evils and produce improvements, but only Calvinism and Presbyterianism went to the root of the matter. *Life of W. Cunningham*, p. 427.

sentences, rigorously concentrates on the views and arguments with which he is dealing. There is no attempt at all to sustain the interest of the reader by the introduction of illustrations, anecdotes or diversions into other realms, but from first to last the sheer force of the unrelieved intellectual momentum is such that every student will find all his faculties kept at full stretch. This characteristic of Cunningham's writings was not exactly a reflection of his personality, for, as his friend J. J. Bonar tells us, he had a tender love for nature, a painter's eye, and an appreciation of the beauties of poetry. He was moreover intensely interested in the details of history and loved "to pour out information as to men, views, idiosyncrasies, disputes and arguments." But these things will not be found in his *Historical Theology*, and the omission was intentional. His object was to deal with leading principles and everything not bearing on this main object was resolutely set aside and suppressed. As his biographer wrote: "The charm of historic detail was necessarily sacrificed; the cross lights from human nature and human experience faded away; the course became severe, and depended wholly on one great interest as its motive and justification. But the service performed for the student became extremely definite; the element introduced into his training became a marked and powerful one. And when this service was performed as Dr. Cunningham performed it, it gave a grasp and vantage of the field of theological discussion which were of inestimable value." These remarks apply almost equally to Dr. Bannerman's *Church of Christ* and it is therefore unnecessary to say anything further in this connection.

At a time when the great need of our land is for spiritual men well grounded in the faith once delivered to the saints, the publishers are thankful to God for making the renewed circulation of these volumes possible. May the consequences be to the glory of Him whom the authors served on earth and whom they now praise above!

IAIN MURRAY

February 1960

PREFACE.

The two volumes now issued, under the general title of *Historical Theology*, are made up almost entirely of Lectures prepared by Dr Cunningham, and annually delivered by him to the students attending the Class of Church History over which he presided in the New College. The MS. of the Lectures was left by him in a very perfect state, having undergone, in the course of successive years, no great alterations as to general substance or even particular statements, but having received careful revision from the Author in minor details.

At the time when Dr Cunningham was appointed Professor, it was all but the invariable practice in our Theological Halls, to make the prelections in the Class of Church History, little other, in substance, than a mere narrative of the rise and progress of the Christian Church, with some account of the leading men, and events, and doctrines connected with it. The wide diffusion of the fruits of modern historical research, ecclesiastical as well as civil, and the publication of numerous treatises and text-books devoted to Church History, rendered such a method of conducting the instructions of the class unsatisfactory and undesirable; and this, added to a different and higher view of the object to be aimed at,

Determined Dr Cunningham to adopt another course. Handing over his students to the many and easily accessible books on ecclesiastical history for its substance and details, and making use of one or other of them as the groundwork for oral examinations in his class, but avoiding a narrative so often repeated, he sought to give in his Lectures the lessons to be gathered from Church History, rather than Church History itself.

He held, and often expressed the belief, that the most valuable and important advantage to be derived from a study of the records of the Christian Church, was to be found in the commentary which the great developments of truth and error, in the course of its history, have furnished upon the word of God, through the occasions they presented, or the necessity they imposed, for ascertaining and determining more fully, and bringing out with greater clearness and precision, the leading doctrines of revelation. The heresies in religion, and the controversies as to truth and error, which make up so large a portion of ecclesiastical history, have uniformly resulted, under the blessing of God, in setting forth in more distinct terms, and on a more solid foundation of Scripture evidence, than before, the truth denied or controverted, —in giving to it a better development and a more definite shape,—in leading both to a more accurate and a more thorough understanding of what is to be believed,—in clearing it from misapprehension and ambiguity,—and in reproducing it again in new forms of speech, better adapted than formerly rightly to embody and express the Faith of the Church. Few, perhaps, of the less

elementary doctrines of Scripture can be said to have been thoroughly apprehended or accurately declared, as regards both their own fulness and their relations to other doctrines, in the Confessions of the Church, until they had passed through the ordeal of controversy, and been both purified from real error, and separated from non-essential truths, by the process. The controversy on the subject of the Trinity in the fourth and fifth centuries, and the discussions on the doctrine of Justification at and after the time of the Reformation, are familiar examples of the fact, to which ecclesiastical history has so often borne testimony, that we are indebted to those conflicts of opinion, which so often broke the peace and endangered the unity of the Church of Christ, for the complete and satisfactory development and establishment of important scriptural truths, which, if some of them were not perverted or denied altogether before, had been only formally and nominally acquiesced in, and therefore, at the best, partially understood or inaccurately expressed.

It was the object of Dr Cunningham, in his Lectures on ecclesiastical history, to give forth the instructions to be thus derived from a study of the records of the Church, in those conjunctures of her history when the leading doctrines of the Faith were put to the test in the strife with men who impugned or misrepresented them; and when, as the result, truth came forth from the furnace all the more pure because of the fire. The examination of these discussions from the apostolic age downwards,—the consideration of the various arguments

by which the fundamental articles of Christian truth have been both assailed and defended,—the review of that sifting and winnowing process through which not only truth has been separated from error, but what is essential and non-essential in the truth itself has been distinguished and put apart,—furnished him with the opportunity and the means of exhibiting and inculcating those lessons of ecclesiastical history, for the sake of which it is mainly important that it should be taught and studied.

The qualifications that he brought to the task eminently fitted him for the effective treatment of his subject in this manner and with this aim. His living faith in, and devout submission to, the word of God, so strongly marked in every page he wrote,—his profound acquaintance with theology in all its departments,—his extensive and complete mastery over ecclesiastical history,—the grasp and accuracy of an intellect fitted to deal alike with the details and general relations of his subject,—the penetration with which he could seize at once on the salient points of the most involved discussion,—and the judicial calmness, clearness, and comprehensiveness of view with which he could give judgment on the combined effect and bearing of all,—enabled him, within the narrowest possible compass, to set forth distinctly the true results of a lengthened and intricate controversy,—to separate between what was irrelevant and what was essential to an argument,—and to assign with precision to each what was due to it. Although himself a master in dialectics, there is something in his

treatment of the important questions discussed in these volumes more admirable than the most skilful dialectics: the accuracy of judgment, the soundness of mind, the breadth and comprehensiveness of view, the ripeness of theological knowledge, the fairness and love of truth, so far removed above feelings of partizanship or the artifices of controversy, the profound reverence for the authority of God in His revelation, which he brings to bear upon the subjects handled, are worthy of all praise; and the success with which he disentangles, and the precision with which he sets forth, the merits of the case, and the proper *status quæstionis*, are better than any argument, and, indeed, oftentimes render argument both unnecessary and impossible. The same features of mind that qualified him, with such ready and decisive effect, at once to lay hold upon those ruling points in an argument upon which the whole controversy hinged, has enabled him also to separate the discussions in these volumes from whatever is due merely to the men engaged in them and to the times of their occurrence, and to exhibit the substance and results of each in such a form as to be of permanent value, fitted to interest and instruct the students of the word of God at all times.

The alterations made on Dr Cunningham's MSS., before sending them to the press, have been few, and these dictated chiefly by a regard to the order in which the topics ought to be arranged, and by the necessity of bringing the matter in the hands of the Editors within the compass of the two volumes now published. In the order in which the Lectures were delivered in the

class-room, some consideration seems to have been given by Dr Cunningham to the expediency or necessity of arranging them so as to suit a course of two years, adapted to the two separate classes under his instructions. The Editors have thought it right to modify this arrangement to some extent, so as to adapt it more to the connection of the topics or the chronological order of the discussions. They have been enabled within the two volumes to give the whole substance of the course, although a few Lectures and portions of Lectures have been omitted, that seemed to be less essential to the general plan, and the insertion of which might have, in some cases, made the connection of the topics more manifest. The minor alterations necessary in changing the Lecture form to that in which the work now appears, in omitting recapitulations and merely academical references,—and in correcting a few verbal inaccuracies, it is unnecessary to advert to, beyond the statement that they in no instance affect the substance of the discussion or the Author's meaning.

As in a former instance, the Editors have to acknowledge the valuable assistance of Rev. John Laing, Librarian, New College, in verifying and correcting the numerous quotations and references contained in these volumes,—a work which, although inferring considerable trouble and sacrifice of time, has been to him a labour of love.

JAMES BUCHANAN.
JAMES BANNERMAN.

NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH, *Nov.* 1862.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE History of the Church comprehends the whole record of God's supernatural communications to men, and of His dealings with His people, and with the societies which they constituted, or of which they formed a part, ever since man fell, and God began His great work of saving sinners,—of calling them out of their natural condition,—and preparing them for the enjoyment of Himself. The most radical and fundamental idea of the church —the ἐκκλησία—is, that it is the company or society of the κλητοὶ,—those who are called by God to a knowledge of supernatural truth, and an acquaintance with the way of salvation. They are the church; and the history of the church is the history of God's dealings with them, and of their conduct under His dealings with them. God Himself has recorded in the Old Testament the history of His church for much the largest portion of the time during which it has yet existed; and the record which He has there given of the history of the church, constitutes a very large portion of the authentic and infallible materials which He has provided for communicating to us certain knowledge as to what we are to believe concerning Him, and as to what duty He requires of us.

We are expressly assured, with more immediate reference to the Old Testament, that all Scripture was given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. We are assured that all these things were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the world have come.

The series of God's dealings with the human race since the

fall has been commonly ranked under three great divisions, usually called œconomies, or dispensations—viz., the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian. These different dispensations have been characterized at once by features of identity and diversity. The character of God, and the great principles of His moral government, the revelation of which has been one great object of all His dealings with men, have of course been at all times the same in themselves, though the knowledge of them has been communicated to men at sundry times and in divers manners. The way in which fallen men were to be saved, has been at all times the same, as it was necessarily and unchangeably determined in its substance, or fundamental provisions and arrangements, by the attributes of God, and the principles of His moral government. Of course, God's great designs with respect to the fallen race of man have been at all times the same, conducted upon the same principles, and directed to the same objects. The chief differences observable in God's successive dispensations towards the human race, are to be found in the *fulness* and *completeness* of the revelation which, at different times, He gave of His character and plans, and especially of the method of salvation; and in the more temporary objects which at different periods He combined with His one grand terminating purpose. The declaration of God when pronouncing sentence upon the serpent immediately after the fall —"He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"—has been commonly spoken of as the protevangelium,—the first proclamation of the Gospel, the first intimation of the method of salvation. And what an imperfect revelation was this of what it most concerns fallen man to know, compared with the declaration that Jesus Christ died for our sins,—viewed in connection with all the materials we possess for enabling us to understand fully what this latter statement implies, *i.e.*, to understand who and what Jesus Christ was, and what is involved in His dying for our sins!

The patriarchal period, or dispensation, extends from the fall to the giving of the law through Moses; and it derives its name from the series of remarkable men, the heads of families and tribes, who form so striking a feature in its history, and with whom God carried on intercourse of a very remarkable kind in making known His will and accomplishing His purposes. During this primitive period, God—*i.e.* (as can be established by satisfactory evidence), God the Son, who was afterwards to take flesh, and to tabernacle

among men — occasionally held personal intercourse with His chosen servants, made successively fuller discoveries of His character and purposes, and in various ways taught men many important lessons.

This dispensation admits of an obvious division into three principal periods. The first of these extends from the fall to the deluge, which was the result of the first great experimental exhibition of the depravity of human nature, of the true character and naturally insuperable tendencies of fallen man; while, at the same time, it also presented striking manifestations of God's sovereignty in carrying into effect His purposes of mercy.

The second division of this period extends from the deluge to what is commonly known as the calling of Abraham, or God's commanding him to leave his native country, Mesopotamia, and proceed to Canaan, which was afterwards to be given to his descendants. This event, too, illustrated God's sovereign purpose of mercy according to election. It was accompanied with a much fuller development than had been previously vouchsafed, of God's plans and purposes with respect to the salvation of men; so that the apostle could refer to what God had said and done in connection with Abraham, as throwing light upon some of the most important and peculiar principles of the Christian revelation. The calling of Abraham was likewise the commencement of an astonishing series of transactions in the history of a chosen people, descended from him, which have most materially influenced the history of the world down to the present day.

The third division of this period extends from the calling of Abraham to the giving of the law. It includes the history of God's dealings with the father of the faithful and his immediate descendants, and affords some very striking illustrations of God's having the hearts of all men in His hand, of His subordinating the most important events in the general history of the world to His own special designs with regard to His church and people, and of His making all things, great and small, work together for good to those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose.

The giving of the law was a very important era in the history of God's dealings with men. It introduced what may be properly regarded as a new and different dispensation, characterized by a fuller revelation of God's attributes and government, a fuller

discovery of the way of salvation, and of God's plans and purposes regarding it; and all this in combination with extensive and detailed provision for effecting some important purposes of a more temporary description. An occasion when God had so much intercourse with man, and in circumstances so remarkable, must have been intended to serve very important ends, and must be well worthy of being thoroughly investigated. The Mosaic dispensation, regarded as a great department in the history of the church, likewise divides itself naturally into three periods, marked by the giving of the law as the introduction of the new state of things, the establishment of the Hebrew monarchy (or, according to an arrangement which some authors prefer as affording a suitable resting-place, the building of the temple), and the Babylonish captivity.

Perhaps, however, the most important feature in this dispensation next to the giving of the law and the setting up of the Mosaic economy, is the mission of the prophets, and the records which have been transmitted to us of the way in which this mission was executed. The history of the series of prophets, and the records of their revelations, exhibit an increasingly fuller development of God's eternal counsel of sovereignty and mercy; and especially they throw much light upon the true nature of a supernatural communication from God to men, and upon the way and manner in which the reality and certainty of a truly supernatural communication may be tested and established. These are indeed the most important facts to be kept in view in surveying the whole history of the Old Testament church, both in the patriarchal and the Mosaic dispensations: viz., first, the evidence afforded by them, or in connection with them, of the reality and the certainty of an actual supernatural communication made by God to men, and especially of the divine mission of our Lord and His apostles; and secondly, the light thrown upon the true nature and import of the substance of the divine communication thus supernaturally made. The two most important questions that can call forth men's interest, or exercise their faculties, are these: first, Has God given to men a supernatural revelation of His will? and secondly, If so, what is the substance of the information which this revelation conveys to us? All other subjects of investigation are subordinate to these. The patriarchal and the Mosaic dispensations ought to be studied chiefly in these aspects; and with a view to these objects, and when

studied in this way, they will be found full of instruction and full of interest.

Because, however, of the paramount importance of the two general questions which have just been stated, and of the necessity of making a selection from a wide field, I do not intend to enter upon any portion of the history of the church recorded in the Old Testament, and preceding the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh. I intend to confine myself to the Christian dispensation,—to the history of the Christian Church, more strictly so called, or the visible society established on earth by our Saviour and His apostles, enjoying the completed revelation of His will, and professing to be guided by it. And my reason for selecting this department of the history is, because it affords the largest amount of materials bearing upon theology properly so called, and fitted to furnish assistance in forming clear, correct, and enlarged conceptions of the whole substance of what God has supernaturally communicated to us. The manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, and the completion of the series of God's supernatural revelations to men through the instrumentality of His immediate followers, form the crown and centre of the whole scheme of God's dealings with mankind, with a reference to which everything else, whether prior or posterior to that great era, ought to be contemplated. God having, in the mission of His Son, and in the inspiration of His apostles and immediate followers, as these have been put on record under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, completed the supernatural revelation of His will to men, the grand object of all men who rightly understand their condition and responsibilities, *must* be to acquire such a knowledge of this revelation as may guide them to salvation and eternal blessedness; and the great end of the gospel ministry is just to aid them in acquiring this knowledge, and in applying it to effect this result. This object, of course, is most directly promoted, and most fully and effectually secured, by the actual study of the revelation which God has given us, and by seeking, from an investigation of the meaning of the statements which it contains, to form definite, accurate, and orderly conceptions of the topics of which it treats. But in dealing with the history of the church, I am persuaded that that department of it which affords the most ample materials for assisting in the understanding of the system of Christian theology, is just the history of the church since the

completed revelation of God's will was put into its hands, and especially the history of the principal discussions which have taken place in regard to its meaning and import. The history of the way in which the church has used this revelation, and of the discussions which have taken place concerning its meaning, are fitted, when rightly used and applied, to afford us important assistance in forming a correct estimate of what it is really adapted and intended to communicate and to effect. I mean, therefore, to attempt to survey the most important discussions on doctrinal subjects which have taken place in the church since God's full and completed revelation was bestowed upon it, for the purpose of making use of the materials which this survey may afford in aiding to ascertain where the truth, the scriptural truth, in the leading controversies which have been carried on really lay; and to discover how the truth upon the particular subject controverted may be most accurately stated, and most successfully defended, and how the opposite error may be most conclusively and effectively refuted. With this view, I mean, after adverting to the discussions which have taken place as to the nature and definition of the church itself, to give some notice of what is commonly called the Council of Jerusalem, as recorded in the book of the Acts, at which the first controversy that arose in the church was taken up and disposed of; and then to proceed to consider the chief controversies which arose and divided the church after the inspired apostles were removed, and the chief subjects of a doctrinal kind which have given rise to controversial discussions in more modern times.

The period of the history of the church from the apostolic age till the present day is usually considered under three great divisions—the ancient, the mediæval, and the modern.

The first of these—the ancient—extends from the apostolic age till the early part of the seventh century,—an era marked by the full establishment of the Pope's supremacy over the Western Church, and the origin of Mohammedanism, and regarded by many as the commencement of the fully developed reign of Antichrist. This period admits of an obvious and important division into the period before, and the period after, the establishment of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine; or, what is very nearly synchronous, the first Œcumenical Council that met at Nice in the year 325.

The second, or mediæval period, reaches from the early part of the seventh century till the Reformation, in the beginning of the sixteenth,—a period of about 900 years. The most important features of this period, so far as our objects as above described are concerned, are the growing corruption of the church in doctrine as well as in character; the full development of the mystery of iniquity, especially the formal establishment of idolatry by the second Council of Nice,—the scholastic theology,—the canon law,—and the efforts made antecedently to Luther and Zwingle, so far as they rested upon a scriptural basis, to oppose Popery and to reform the church.

The third and last, or the modern period, extends from the commencement of the Reformation till the present day.

The most valuable object which the student of historical and polemic theology can aim at is to endeavour to trace, by a survey of controversial discussions, how far God's completed revelation of His will was rightly used by the church for guiding to a correct knowledge and application of divine truth, and how far it was misapplied and perverted. With reference to this object, there can be no doubt that much the most important period in the history of the church is the Reformation from Popery, and the period intervening between that great era and the present day. And the reason of this is, that at and since the Reformation, every topic in Christian theology, and indeed every branch of theological literature, has been discussed and cultivated with much greater ability and learning, or at least in a much more rational, systematic, and satisfactory way, than during the whole previous period of the church's history. There can, I think, be no reasonable doubt, that in point of intrinsic merit as authors, as successful labourers in expounding and establishing Christian truth, in bringing out clearly and intelligently, and in exhausting the various topics which they discussed, the Reformers and the divines who succeeded them are immeasurably superior to the theologians of preceding generations. In the respects to which I have referred,—and they are, beyond all question, the most important, so far as concerns the real value of authors and their writings,—the Fathers and the Schoolmen are mere children, compared with the Reformers and with the great Protestant divines of the seventeenth century. Of the main topics in Christian theology which are still the subjects of occasional con-

troversial discussion, and are, therefore, still of some practical importance, as actually bearing upon the process of the formation of men's opinions, almost the only ones which can be said to have undergone anything like a satisfactory discussion, antecedently to the Reformation, are the Trinity, and some of the leading points involved in the Pelagian controversy; and even these have been much better and more fully discussed, so far as concerns the true bearing of the correctly ascertained meaning of Scripture upon the matter in dispute, in modern than in ancient times,—*i.e.*, in the Socinian and Arminian, than in the Arian and Pelagian controversies. On the ground of this general truth, it is of much greater importance for all the proper ends of historical theology, or the history of doctrines, to survey and investigate the history of theological literature and discussion during the last three, than during the preceding fourteen, centuries. At the same time, there is no period in the history of the church that is entirely unfruitful, or that should be wholly neglected, even in its bearing on Christian theology, and independently of its historical value and importance. The first four centuries after the apostolic age, or the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries of the Christian era, are invested with no small measure of interest and importance with respect to the history of theology, as well as in other respects: the second and third centuries exhibiting the church in what was indeed, in some respects, its purest state, but exhibiting also the seeds, at least, of almost all the errors and corruptions which afterwards so extensively prevailed; and the fourth and fifth exhibiting a far larger amount of talents and learning among the doctors of the church than ever before, or for many centuries afterwards, she possessed,—applied, too, in defence of some important scriptural truths; but, at the same time, with a growing measure of error, which soon spread darkness over the church,—a darkness dispelled only by the light of the Reformation.

THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH.

Sec. 1.—*Nature of the Church.*

THE questions as to what the church is,—what is the proper definition of it, and what are its qualities, prerogatives, marks, or distinguishing characters,—have given rise to a good deal of discussion, and are invested with considerable importance. They enter very deeply and influentially into the controversy between the Church of Rome and the Protestant churches, as it has been commonly conducted. Papists are usually anxious, when engaged in controversy with Protestants, to give prominence to the general subject of the church,—and this for two reasons: first, because they think—and they are not wholly mistaken in the opinion—that they have something to say upon the general topic of the church as it is set before us in Scripture, which is somewhat more plausible than anything they find it practicable to adduce in regard to many of the particular doctrines controverted between them and Protestants,—and have found in experience the discussion of this topic more successful than any other in making converts to Popery; and secondly, because, were the views which they generally propound on the general subject of the church, and their application to the Church of Rome, established, this would supersede all further discussion of individual doctrines; for the practical result of them is virtually to put the church in the room of God as the immediate revealer of all truth, as well as the dispenser of all

grace, or at least to put the church in the room of His word as the only standard of faith,—and the conclusion, of course, is, that men should implicitly submit their understandings to whatever the church may promulgate to them.

The substance of the Romish doctrine upon this general subject is, that Christ has established on earth the church as a distinct society, which is not only to continue always indefectible or without ceasing to exist, but to stand out visibly and palpably—distinguished from all other societies, civil or ecclesiastical,—that it is not liable to error, but will always continue to promulgate the truth, and the truth alone. When they have proved this, they *then* try to prove that this one church of Christ, always visible and infallible, must of necessity be in communion with the Church of Rome, the mother and mistress of all churches, and in subjection to the Bishop of Rome, the vicar of Christ and the monarch of His church. Protestants admit that the church, as a distinct society instituted by Christ, considered generally or in its totality, is indefectible;—*i.e.*, they believe that, in point of fact, it will never cease to exist, because Christ has explicitly promised this. They do not admit that there is anything in Scripture predicting, promising, or implying that it is to be always visible in the sense of the Romanists—*i.e.*, that there must be at all times, in unbroken or continuous succession, an organized society publicly and palpably standing out to the eyes of men as the church of Christ; and they utterly deny that there is any good foundation for ascribing infallibility to the church in the Romish sense. They hold that there is no ground, either in scriptural statement or in historical fact, for asserting that there must always be, and has always been upon earth, a society, visible and easily recognisable, which has at all times held and proclaimed the truth of God without any mixture of error; while they further maintain that such a description does certainly not apply *de facto* to the Church of Rome, or to the church in connection with the Papal See.

It is very evident, from the nature of the case, that questions of this sort can be rightly decided only by an appeal to the sacred Scriptures, which both parties admit to be the word of God, and more particularly by investigating what the Scriptures sanction concerning the proper definition or description of the church, and concerning the privileges and prerogatives which Christ has conferred on, or promised to, it. These controversies, indeed, may

be said to turn essentially upon this question, What definition or description of the church does the Scripture warrant or require us to give? It was upon this ground that the investigation of the proper definition or description of the church entered so largely into the controversies between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, and that in most of the confessions of the Reformed churches we find a formal definition or description of the church as an important article of Scripture doctrine.

To show more clearly the importance of settling from Scripture what is the proper definition or description of the church, I may refer to one leading department of the argument carried on between the Reformers and the Romanists. The Romanists were accustomed to employ the following argument:—Where there is not a valid ministry, there is no true church. Protestants have not a valid ministry, and therefore they are not a true church. The Reformers' answer was in substance this:—Wherever there is a true church, there is or may be a valid ministry. Protestants are a true church, or a true branch of the church, and therefore they have or may have—*i.e.*, are entitled, or have a right, to a valid ministry. Now, it is quite manifest that the whole of this argumentation *upon both sides* depends essentially upon the question, What is a true church? or, in other words, what is the scriptural view of the real nature, the essential qualities, and necessary or invariable properties of the church of Christ? and more especially, is the possession of a valid ministry essential to it in all possible circumstances; and if so, what constitutes a valid ministry? Papists, accordingly, usually try to introduce into the definition of the church elements which, if admitted or proved from Scripture, would formally or virtually settle the controversy, and decide in favour of their views. In the common Popish catechisms, the church is defined to be the congregation of all the faithful professing the same faith, partaking in the same sacraments, governed by lawful pastors under one visible head, the vicar of Christ. Cardinal Bellarmine, the great champion of Popery, expresses it thus: "Coetus hominum ejusdem Christianae fidei professione, et eorundem Sacramentorum communione colligatus, sub regimine legitimorum pastorum, ac praecipue unius Christi in terris Vicarii Romani Pontificis;" and he immediately adds, very truly and very simply, "Ex qua definitione facilè colligi potest, qui homines ad Ecclesiam pertineant,

qui vero ad eam non pertineant."* This definition, if admitted, certainly settles conclusively some important questions. But Protestants do not accept it: they demand, as they are entitled to do, scriptural proof for all the different elements introduced into the definition; and they are very sure that for some of them no such proof can be adduced. This, of course, throws us back upon the question, What view of the church is really given us in Scripture? what ideas does Scripture authorize and require us to introduce into our definition or description of it?

We find in Scripture that the word ἐκκλησία, commonly translated church, is applied sometimes to an assembly or collected number of men of any sort; as, for instance, when it is used in describing the tumultuous assembly in the theatre of Ephesus.† It is commonly employed, however, in a more limited or specific sense, as descriptive of a society or collected number of men standing in a certain peculiar relation to Jesus Christ; and even in this more limited sense, we find it used in several different applications. When we read in Scripture that the church is Christ's body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; that He loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; when we read of the general assembly and church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven,—we cannot doubt that *here* the word church is employed as descriptive (to use the language of our Confession) "of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the Head thereof;" and further, that in the passages referred to, none but those who have been chosen by God to salvation through Christ, and also are all in consequence saved, are regarded as comprehended in the church. There is, then, a church spoken of in Scripture which consists of the whole body of the elect, the believing, the saved,—of those who are chosen through Christ to faith and salvation, and who in due time attain to them, and of none others. Moreover, if this be the true meaning of the word in the passages referred to, it is evident from the nature of the case, and from the general scope and object of the passages, that whatever other meanings the word may bear, *this*, if indeed a real meaning of the word, must be its *leading, guiding*

* De Ecclesia, Lib. III. cap. 2. † Acts xix. 32, 41.

meaning,—that which must to some extent regulate and modify the rest.

Now, the church in this sense has been usually spoken of by Protestant divines as invisible; and the idea which they intend to convey by so designating it, is the very obvious and just one, that as those who are elected to life cannot with certainty be known or recognised individually by men even after they have been brought by God's grace to believe and to enter upon the way of salvation, the company or society so constituted cannot, *as to its particular component members*, be accurately and certainly discerned. The reason which led Protestants to give prominence to this idea of the invisible church as now explained, was, that the Church of Rome maintains visibility, as including external organization, to be an essential property of the Church, and founds important conclusions upon this position. If visibility be an *essential* property of the church, then it would seem to follow that a public and unbroken succession of a continuous society from the time of the apostles must have existed upon earth, and been distinctly traceable as the true church of Christ; and on this position they have always laboured to rest much in establishing the claims of the Church of Rome. Besides, it is chiefly by means of the statements made in Scripture which Protestants think applicable only to the whole number of the elect viewed as one body, or the invisible church, that Papists expect to be able to establish their peculiar views of the dignity, authority, and infallibility of the church as visible. Protestants, finding in the passages of Scripture formerly referred to, clear proof that the word church is used as a general term to describe the whole number of those who are elected and ultimately saved, viewed collectively, conclude that the Scripture does set before us an invisible church; and *hence infer* that visibility, in the sense in which it has been explained, and in which alone it is available for Popish purposes in this argument, is not an essential quality of the church of Christ in at least one of the leading aspects in which the church is presented to us in the Bible.

This, then, is one important topic of discussion,—Does the Scripture speak of a church consisting only of those who are predestinated to life and ultimately saved, and therefore invisible, in the sense formerly explained; or does it not? Protestants affirm this, Papists deny it. The passages formerly referred to

prove this, and the attempts of Bellarmine and of other Popish writers to explain them away are utterly unsuccessful. These men prove indeed that there is a church spoken of in Scripture that is visible, or stands out palpably to the observation of men; but Protestants do not dispute that the Scripture sets before us a visible as well as an invisible church: not meaning, as Papists commonly allege, to represent these as two distinct or separate subjects, two different churches properly so called; but as two different phases or aspects of what is in substance one and the same.

To illustrate this, let us briefly advert to the scriptural evidence of the existence of a catholic or general visible church, and the mode in which the idea arose and was developed. We read frequently in Scripture of the church of a particular place specified, and also of the churches of a particular district named. These churches must have been visible societies, having some outward marks of distinction by which they and their members might be recognised. When it is said,* "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," this plainly implies that there was antecedently existing a visible society to which these additions were made. The kingdom of God or of Christ is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as being virtually identical with the church; and it is set before us by such descriptions and similitudes as plainly imply that, in point of fact, it did contain persons of a different character from those whom the Lord added to the church on the occasion described in the passage quoted from the Acts. But there is no difficulty in reconciling these two things. The ἐκκλησία, both etymologically and really, is just the assembly or congregation of the κλητοὶ, those who are called out of the world. Christ calls men to come out of the world, to believe in Him, to submit to His authority, *and to unite together in an organized society of which He is the head, and which is to be governed exclusively by His laws.* We have plain indications in Scripture of a distinction between the outward and the inward call, or the effectual and the ineffectual call; in other words, we have good grounds in Scripture to believe that cases did, in point of fact, occur even in apostolic times, in which men professed to obey Christ's call by outwardly joining the society of the κλητοὶ, while they had not

* Acts ii. 47.

really by faith received Him as their Saviour, or in heart submitted to His authority. It was Christ's intention and requirement, that those who were effectually called and enabled by grace to receive Him personally and individually as their Saviour and their Master, should not only individually profess their faith in Him, and their subjection to His authority, but should also unite together in the discharge of certain outward duties which He enjoined, and in the enjoyment of certain privileges which He conferred; and it was *not* His intention to employ any supernatural means of accurately discriminating upon earth between those who made this profession in sincerity and truth, and those who, in making it, were deceiving themselves or others by a profession which did not correspond with the real state of their hearts and characters.

There thus arose, through the preaching of the gospel, and the labours of the apostles, a body or company of men visibly distinguished from the mass of men around them, by their professing, individually and collectively, faith in Christ, and subjection to Him; and though it very soon appeared that, in point of fact, some had been admitted outwardly into this society who were not the genuine followers of Christ, yet it followed naturally, and almost necessarily, that the same names and designations which were properly and strictly applicable only to the true κλητοὶ, were applied to the company or society of those who professed to have obeyed the gospel call, and were, in consequence, visibly and outwardly associated with the followers of Christ. Thence arose the reality and the conception of the visible, as distinguished from the invisible church; of the professed followers of Christ, viewed collectively, and characterized by certain outward marks cognizable by men, as distinguished from the true followers of Christ, who were all chosen by God before the foundation of the world, who are all in due time united to Him by faith as members of His body, and who are at length admitted to share in His glory; and this idea of the visible, as distinguished from the invisible church, though not a different church from it, is most explicitly brought out in Scripture when it speaks of the church, or the churches, of particular cities or districts. But as the idea of catholicity or universality is most obviously and most properly applicable to the invisible church, as comprehending all the individuals of the human race, in every age and country, who have been chosen of

God to salvation through Jesus Christ; so the same general idea may, without impropriety, be applied to the visible church, when now, under the gospel, it is not confined to one nation, as before, under the law,—the catholic or universal visible church thus consisting, as our Confession of Faith says, "of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children." Romanists commonly allege, as we have hinted, that this assertion of a visible and an invisible church is making two churches, whereas the Scriptures ascribe unity to the church, or speak of the church as one. But this allegation rests upon a misstatement of the case. They are not properly two churches, but one church, contemplated in two different aspects—an internal and an external. They do not occupy different spheres, but the same sphere. The visible church includes or contains the invisible, though, in its present imperfect condition, it has also mixed up with it some inferior elements,—some chaff, which will one day be separated from the wheat.

But really the great question is this: Does the Scripture indeed speak of a church—a church catholic or universal—consisting of all those, but of those only, who are elected to life, and ultimately saved, and therefore invisible in the sense above explained? If it does, as is surely evident enough, then this plainly must be the proper, principal sense of the word—the leading idea attached to it—that to which any other notion, to which, from necessity or convenience, the word may have been applied, must be regarded as subordinate. And if this is once proved, then it follows that visibility, including regular external organization, cannot be held to be a necessary or essential property of the church of Christ; and consequently there is no necessity of applying what is said in Scripture about certain of the prerogatives and privileges of the church to any visible society, or to any portion of any visible society. The course, then, of the argumentative discussion upon these points may be summed up in this way:—Romanists say the church is indefectible, or will never cease to exist. Protestants admit this; and hence Bellarmine says,* "notandum est multos ex nostris tempus terere, dum probant absolute Ecclesiam non posse deficere: nam Calvinus, et cæteri hæretici id concedunt: sed dicunt, intelligi debere de Ecclesia invisibili." It is true that,

* De Ecclesia, Lib. III. cap. 13.

as Bellarmine says, Calvin and other heretics concede this, but say that it is to be understood of the invisible church ;—*i.e.*, they contend that the only sense in which the indefectibility of the church can be *proved* from Scripture is this, that from the time when Christ ascended to the right hand of His Father, there have always been, and until He come again there will always be, upon earth, *some* persons who have been chosen to salvation, and who, during their earthly career, are prepared for it. More than this may have, in point of fact, been realized in providence, with respect to the standing and manifestation of the church on earth in every age; but Protestants contend that nothing more than this can be proved to be implied in the statements and promises of Scripture upon this subject,—*i.e.*, that for aught that can be proved, all the statements of Scripture may be true, and all its predictions and promises may have been fulfilled, though nothing more than this had been realized.

The Romanists go on to assert that this indefectible church is visible, and, while it exists, must possess visibility. Protestants, while conceding the existence of visible churches, not composed exclusively of elect or believing persons, and even of "a catholic visible church, consisting of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children," deny that there is anything in Scripture which guarantees the constant existence at all times, or in any one particular country, of an organized ecclesiastical society standing out visibly and palpably to the eyes of men as the true church of Christ; and, on the contrary, they think that there are pretty plain intimations in Scripture, that in some periods the true church under the New Testament, as happened with the church under the law—when there were still, though the prophet could not discern them, seven thousand men in secret, who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal—might be reduced so low as not to possess anything that could with propriety be called visibility. The Romanists further assert that the church, *i.e.*, the indefectible visible church—for they now assume it to be indefectible, and always visible in their sense—is infallible, —*i.e.*, that she always holds and proclaims the truth of God without any mixture of error; and in endeavouring to establish this position, they rest mainly upon the statements and promises of Scripture, which plainly relate not to any one visible society, not to

the catholic visible church, or to any one branch or section of it, but to the true people of God; while, even in reference to them, the statements and promises referred to do not assure to them perfect freedom from all error, or entire uniformity among themselves in all points of belief, but merely such a knowledge of God's revealed will as may, even though in many of them mixed with some error, be sufficient to guide them to eternal life.

These general considerations, when followed out and applied, and viewed in connection with the scriptural statements which have been referred to, serve to unravel the web of error and plausible sophistry which the Church of Rome has woven around this subject as a general topic of discussion; while it should be remembered, also, that even if we were to concede to them their general positions in their own sense about the indefectibility, visibility, and infallibility of the church, there would still be a gap to be filled up, or rather, an impassable gulf to be crossed, before these principles could be shown to apply to the Church of Rome, so as to establish *her* supremacy and infallibility, as if she were the only true church of Christ, or the mother and mistress of all churches.

These observations serve to explain the meaning and application, and the scriptural ground of the doctrine of our Confession of Faith upon this subject, as expressed in the following words:—"This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less, visible; and particular Churches which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some of them have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless there shall be always a Church on earth to worship God according to His will."*

From the primary etymological meaning of the word ἐκκλησία, viz., an assembly, it was quite natural that, even after it was applied to designate the whole body of true believers, or the whole body of professing Christians, it should still continue to be applied to any branch or section of this body or community; and of this we have repeated instances in Scripture, as when we read of the church

* Chap. 25, secs. 4 and 5.

which was at Jerusalem, the churches of Galatia, etc. It has been very confidently asserted, that there is no instance in Scripture of the word ἐκκλησία, in the singular number, being ever applied to anything intermediate between a single congregation meeting together for religious worship, and the whole community of believers or professing Christians, viewed collectively as a whole. This is a favourite position of those who support what are called Independent or Congregational views of church government; and it has been conceded to them by some professed Presbyterians, such as Dr Campbell of Aberdeen, who had quite as much of the affectation as of the reality of honesty and candour. There can be no doubt that these are the two senses in which the word church is most commonly used in Scripture. It is undeniable that the word ἐκκλησία is applied in Scripture to a single congregation meeting together for the worship of God; and that on many occasions, when the different congregations scattered over a district are spoken of, they are described not as the church, but the churches of that country.

But we are not prepared to admit that this usage is universal in Scripture, so as to form an adequate basis for laying down as a general principle the unwarrantableness of applying the designation of a church to anything but a single congregation, or, what is virtually the same thing, the entire independency of each congregation, as having universally, in ordinary circumstances, entire sufficiency within itself for all the purposes of a church. It is laid down in our Form of Church Government, prepared by the Westminster Assembly, that "the Scripture doth hold forth that many particular congregations may be under one presbyterial government;" and I think this proposition is proved by the evidence and instances adduced in the cases of Jerusalem and Ephesus. Considering the numbers of converts in Jerusalem who professed their faith in Christ through the preaching of the apostles after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we cannot suppose that they were all accustomed ordinarily to assemble together in one place for public worship—we cannot doubt that they commonly met in different places as distinct congregations. Mosheim,* who on some points has made considerable concessions to the Congregationalists, asserts this Presbyterian

* Commentarii, p. 116.

position very confidently, and indeed staked his whole reputation upon its truth in the following words :—" Aut nihil ego video, aut certum hoc est, amplissimam illam, quam Apostoli Hierosolymis collegerant, Christianorum multitudinem in plures minores familias divisam fuisse, singulisque his familiis suos presbyteros, suos ministros, suos conventuum sacrorum locos fuisse." Yet these distinct congregations are still spoken of repeatedly as the church which was at Jerusalem ; and this *church*, consisting of several congregations, is represented as being under the superintendence of one united body of apostles, and presbyters, or elders. In like manner, we cannot doubt, from what we are told of Paul's labours for three years in Ephesus, that there were several congregations in that city, while yet they are described in the Apocalypse as the church in Ephesus, or the Ephesian church (for there are two readings, supported by about an equal amount of critical authority) ;* and they are represented by Paul, in his address contained in the 20th chapter of the Acts, as a flock under the superintendence of a united body of men, whom he describes as at once presbyters and bishops. On these grounds, I think there is sufficient evidence in Scripture, that the word church in the singular number is applied to something intermediate between a single congregation on the one hand, and the catholic or universal church on the other,—viz., to a number of congregations united together in external communion and government ; and that, of course, such a union of congregations is lawful and warrantable, and that to whatever extent such a union or combination may lawfully go, according as circumstances or providence may admit or require it, the designation of a church, and all the general principles and rules applicable to a church as such, may be warrantably applied to the union or combination.

States that the Jerusalem Churches scattered into these Regions

Sec. II.—*Notes of the Church.*

The subject of the notes or marks of the true church, which also occupies a prominent place in the controversy between the

* The reading in the textus receptus (Rev. ii. 1) is, της Εφεσινης εκκλησιας, for which Griesbach substitutes, της εν Εφεσῳ εκκλησιας ; and is followed in this by Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf. Tregelles alleges that, in Acts ix. 31, we should read εκκλησία, and not εκκλησίαι, "the church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria," (Account of the printed text of the Greek New Testament, p. 269) ; and this reading is adopted by Tischendorf and Lachmann, *in loc.*

Protestants and the Papists, has respect properly only to the visible church and its different branches or sections. It is not a subject of very great intrinsic importance, except in so far as it is necessary to refute the arguments which Papists found upon this topic in support of the claims of the Church of Rome.

That, of course, is the best and purest branch of the professing visible church, which, in its doctrine, government, worship, and discipline, most fully accords with the views upon all these points that are sanctioned by the word of God; and as the word of God plainly teaches that the principal function of the visible church, as an organized society, is to be a pillar and ground of the truth—*i.e.*, to support and hold up the truth of God before men—we cannot refuse the title of a true or real church of Christ to any society which is organized in professed subjection to His authority, and with a professed submission to His word, *and* which holds forth to men those great fundamental truths, on the knowledge and belief of which the salvation of sinners depends. These are evidently the true fundamental principles applicable to this matter, and there is no very great difficulty in the application of them. But as Papists dwell very much upon this subject of the notes or marks of the church, and draw from it many important practical conclusions, it may be proper briefly to advert to their leading views upon this point.

When Romanists put forth the claim on behalf of the Church of Rome to be the only true church, out of which there is no salvation; or to be the mother and mistress of all churches, to whom all the followers of Christ, all the members of His visible church, are bound to be in subjection,—they are called upon to produce and establish the grounds of this claim. Legitimate grounds for such a claim can be found only in the statements of Scripture; because, first, from the nature of the case, such a claim can rest upon no other foundation than the direct authority of God Himself; and, secondly, because the sacred Scriptures form the only common ground between the two parties in the discussion—the only common standard which both the advocates and the opposers of this claim admit, and therefore the only legitimate starting-point in an argument that can be honestly carried on between them. But Papists are not fond of attempting to establish this claim directly from the testimony of Scripture,—first, because they have a pretty distinct consciousness,

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whatever they may pretend, that Scripture does not afford them any sufficient materials for doing so; and, secondly, because if, by entering upon such a discussion, it were practically conceded that an important investigation of the meaning of Scripture, conducted by men individually in the ordinary exercise of their faculties, could settle this important general question, there could be no good reason assigned why the same process should not be legitimately employed in determining all other questions at issue between the contending parties. They, therefore, in discussing this subject, usually prefer a different course,—that, viz., of trying to produce what they call motives of credibility,—*i.e.*, certain general considerations suggested by Scripture, certain general views indicated there as to the qualities or properties of the church of Christ, which, when applied to the various societies over the world claiming this character, establish, they allege, the peculiar claims of the Church of Rome, and exclude those of all other professedly Christian societies not comprehended in her communion, and subject to her jurisdiction. When they are expatiating upon this subject at large, and endeavouring to bring out in detail, for popular purposes, all the presumptions or probabilities in favour of the preferable claims of the Church of Rome, as compared with those of other professedly Christian societies, they are accustomed to give many notes or marks of the true church. Bellarmine, for instance, gives *fifteen*,—viz., the name Catholic, usually applied to the Church of Rome, and often conceded even by its opponents; antiquity; uninterrupted duration; amplitude, or great numbers of adherents; the succession of bishops in the Roman Church from the apostles; agreement in doctrine with the ancient church; union of the members among themselves and with the head; sanctity of doctrine; efficacy of doctrine; holiness of life; the glory of miracles; the light of prophecy; the confession of adversaries; the unhappy end of the opponents of the church; and the temporal felicity she has enjoyed. But when they treat the matter more compendiously, or when they are obliged to attempt to reason more rigidly, because discussing the subject of the foundations and validity of this mode of proof in general, they usually content themselves with laying down *four* notes or marks of the true church, taken from the epithets given to the church in the Nicene or Constantinopolitan creed, viz., unity, sanctity, apostolicity, and catholicity.

The substance of the argument is this: the church of Christ is described in Scripture, and in the Creed, as one, holy, apostolic, and catholic: the Church of Rome is one, holy, apostolic, and catholic; and no other church or professedly Christian society can exhibit these notes or marks of the true church. We have not to do at present with the actual and detailed application of these notes or marks to the Church of Rome, or to other churches, but merely with their application to the church of Christ generally. We had occasion already to point out some of the ambiguities and sophistries involved in the common Popish representations and arguments about the indefectibility, the perpetual visibility, and the infallibility of the church; and we have something very similar to point out in regard to the topics now under consideration. Protestants have generally received the Nicene creed as sound and orthodox, and have no hesitation in professing their belief that the church of Christ is one, holy, apostolic, and catholic; but then they contend, first, that these notes or marks are not to be taken in the sense which the Papists attach to them, or with the application they make of them; and, secondly, that in the sense in which the Scripture sanctions the application of these notes or marks to the church of Christ, they afford no countenance whatever to the claims of the Church of Rome. These are two distinct positions, which in a *full* discussion of the subject it would be proper to treat separately, but which, in the very few remarks we have at present to make upon it, may be adverted to together.

Unity is undoubtedly ascribed in Scripture to the church of Christ, to His true servants; and hence it follows that all who are admitted to be His real disciples must profess and exhibit some qualities in which they agree, or are one; and also all societies admitted to belong to the church of Christ, or to be churches of Christ, must profess and exhibit some points of unity. Protestants, conceding this, have no difficulty in making out unity in many respects,—a large measure of oneness,—in all the individuals whom they admit to be Christians, and in all the societies which they admit to be churches. They are bound to point out, and they have no difficulty in doing so, a substantial oneness or identity among true Christians in the fundamental articles of their creed, and in the leading elements and features of their character; and in all societies which are really churches of Christ, or portions of

His visible catholic church, a substantial accordance or unity in doctrine and practice, in the profession of the fundamental doctrines which Christ has revealed and enjoined His church to proclaim, and in the performance of those duties or the administration of those ordinances which should characterize societies organized in His name, and in professed subjection to His authority. And here I may remark, by the way, that it is manifestly impossible to unravel the sophistries, and to answer the arguments, of Papists on the subject of the unity of the church, without admitting or assuming the existence of a distinction in point of intrinsic importance among the articles of revealed truth,—a distinction commonly expressed by saying that some are fundamental and others are not; and that, on this ground, Papists have generally denied this distinction, and Protestants have generally contended for it. With this distinction, and with the important truths based upon it which have just been stated, as applicable to Christians and to churches, there is no difficulty in showing that the *only* really relevant question in the application of the unity of the church as a note or mark of what the church is, or of what are churches, is this, Does the unity ascribed in Scripture to the church imply that there must be entire uniformity in all matters of belief and practice among all Christians, or that all societies claiming to be regarded as churches of Christ must be included in one external visible communion, and subject to one external visible government? It can be easily proved that there is no warrant in Scripture for alleging that the unity there predicated of the church of Christ necessarily implies this; and if so, then there is not a shadow of ground for the conclusion that the Church of Rome, or any one visible society, must be the *one* church of Christ, and that all other professedly Christian societies are beyond its pale.

We need not enlarge upon the other notes or marks of sanctity, apostolicity, and catholicity, as this brief notice of the unity is sufficient to indicate how the case really stands, and how the argument is to be conducted. It can be easily proved that the common Popish notions of sanctity, apostolicity, and catholicity, as properties and notes of the true church, are unwarranted by Scripture; and that, in so far as Scripture does represent these qualities as characteristic marks of the true church, they do not apply peculiarly and exclusively, if at all, to the Church of Rome.

Unity and catholicity in the Popish sense—*i.e.*, unity in outward communion, and uniformity in outward profession, ordinances, and arrangements, and wide diffusion at all times over the earth in the manifestation of *this* unity—cannot be proved from Scripture to be characteristic notes or marks of the true church, and can therefore afford no scriptural support to the claims of the Church of Rome; while sanctity and apostolicity—*i.e.*, holiness of heart and life, and conformity to the apostolic model—not only do not peculiarly characterize the Church of Rome, as distinguished from other churches, but may be made to afford conclusive arguments against her claims. The Church of Rome is, in all its features, flatly opposed to the representations given us in Scripture of the apostolic church; and no branch of the church has ever done so little, in proportion to its means and opportunities, to produce holiness, or done so much to corrupt the standard of morals, to eradicate a sense of moral responsibility, and to open the floodgates of all iniquity.

No professing church, however widely it may be diffused, and however closely its members may be united together in a common profession, and whatever pretensions, therefore, it may be able to put forth to an outward visible unity, or to catholicity, in a limited sense, can have any claim to be regarded as possessed of sanctity or apostolicity, unless its system of doctrine be in accordance with the word of God; and a church is apostolical just in proportion as in all its arrangements it is framed after the model, so far as the Scripture makes it known to us, of the churches which the apostles established.

The churches which have been most forward to assume the designation and the character of apostolical are just those which have departed furthest from what a faithful adherence to the practice of the apostles would have led them to adopt; and when particular churches attach primary importance, in forming an estimate of themselves and of other branches of the visible church, to anything external,—to points of government and order, to a historical visible succession, to outward ordinances and arrangements,—this only proves that they themselves have fallen into grievous error upon most important points affecting the very nature, functions, and objects of a church of Christ; and that therefore, in point of purity and apostolicity, they must rank far beneath those churches which, holding the substance of revealed Christian

truth, appreciate aright its paramount importance, and apply it to its intended purposes.

The corruption into which the visible church after the apostolic age so speedily and so extensively fell, and the desire to defend or to palliate all this, soon introduced very lax and erroneous views concerning the nature and objects of the church in general, concerning its constituent elements and qualities, and the standard by which it ought to be judged. The visible has in men's minds, to a large extent, swallowed up the invisible church, or thrown it into the background; and men have come, to a large extent, to judge practically of what the church of Christ should be, by what it too often, in its external aspects, actually is. It is certainly marvellous that any man having access to the Scriptures should believe that the Church of Rome bears any resemblance to the church of the New Testament; and it is not much less marvellous, considering the superior light and opportunities of the parties, that the members of the Church of England should be so forward to boast of their church, as they usually do, as pure and apostolical, the best constituted church in the world, etc., etc., when it is notorious that their own Reformers were so fully conscious that they had come far short of attaining to a right reformation, and when that church has always borne, and still bears, in its constitution and arrangements, so many palpable proofs of the operation, not of the New Testament standard, but of carnal policy and secular influences.

Let us seek to be more familiar with the scriptural doctrine, that the true church of Christ, in the highest and most proper sense of the word, consists only of those who have been chosen of God to eternal life, who are effectually called in due time to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are trained up to a meetness for heaven; and let all our views, impressions, and conduct in regard to the visible church, and its different branches, be regulated by *some* reference to this great invisible reality,—that thus we may be led to estimate the purity and efficiency of visible churches, mainly by a respect to the spiritual character and attainments of their individual members, and that we may ever have it as the great object of our prayers and labours, that the Lord would add daily unto the church of such as shall be saved, and would lead them to grow up *in all things* unto Him who is the Head.

Sec. III.—*Promises to the Church.*

Before speaking of the promises which Christ has made to His church, I may advert to one other point in the general doctrine of Scripture on the subject, as set forth in the 25th chapter of the Westminster Confession, which I have not yet explained. The views which I have attempted to explain are fitted, I think, to illustrate and confirm most of the positions contained in that chapter in regard to the church in general. But there is one which may deserve explanation, to which I have not formally adverted, though I adverted to some principles which are fitted to cast light upon it. It is this,—that unto this catholic visible church (previously described as consisting of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children), "Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world, and doth by His own presence and Spirit make them effectual thereunto."

Now, the first part of this statement, that Christ has *given* the ministry, as well as the oracles and ordinances of God, *to* the church, does bear, and was intended to bear, upon an important topic, to which I formerly adverted when explaining the state of the question in one department of the argument carried on between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, and to which I then referred for the purpose of illustrating the importance of settling the proper definition or description of the church. Papists used to lay down this position,—Where there is not a valid ministry, there is not a true church; and the Reformers answered them by laying down this counter-position,—Wherever there is a true church, there is, or may be, a valid ministry; and to this position of the Reformers,* the declaration of the Confession, that Christ has given the ministry to the church, is substantially equivalent. The Popish position virtually proceeds upon the assumption that the church is for the sake of the ministry, and the Protestant one upon the assumption that the ministry is for the sake of the church. The Church of Rome makes the ministry the end, and the church the means; Protestants reverse this order, and make the ministry the means, and the

* "Claude's Defence of the Reformation," P. IV. c. III.

church the end. Ministers are indeed the rulers of churches or congregations, invested, in conjunction with other ecclesiastical office-bearers, with a certain ministerial, not lordly, authority over them. But while this is true of actual ministers and congregations, it is not the less true that the ministry in the abstract may be said to occupy a position of subordination, and not of superiority, to the church, inasmuch as the formation of a church by calling men out of the world, and preparing them for heaven, was God's great design in sending His Son into the world, and in all His dealings with men; and as the institution of a ministry, and the raising up and qualifying of ministers, was just one of the means which He has been graciously pleased to employ for effecting that great end. And this is in substance the idea intended to be conveyed by the declaration in the Confession, that Christ has *given* the ministry to the church.

This doctrine is not in the least inconsistent with that of the divine institution of the ministry, or with that of the due rights and authority of ministers, as rulers, distinguished from the ordinary members of the church. But it suggests important considerations that ought not to be overlooked, and that are fitted to exert a wholesome practical influence, respecting the nature and design both of the ministry and of the church. The salvation of an elect people chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world—in other words, the planting and training of the true church—constitute God's great design in preserving this world, and in the whole providence which He exercises over it. There can be no higher or more exalted position than to be employed by God in contributing to this end. Still, the system of means which He may have been pleased to employ, must always be regarded as in some sense subordinate to the end to be effected; and a time will come when the ministry, as well as prophecy and tongues, shall cease, when the whole church shall be presented to God a glorious church, and when the functions of human teachers and human rulers shall terminate, while it will still continue true, that they who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

The bearing of this relative position of the ministry and the church—the ministry being for the sake of the church, and not the church for the sake of the ministry—upon the principles discussed between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, is

obvious enough. If this principle be true—and the Scripture plainly enough supports it—then these two inferences may be deduced from it: First, that the question, whether any particular company or society of professing Christians be or be not a true church, *should take precedence of* the question, whether or not they have a valid ministry? Secondly, that the Scripture not having explicitly asserted, or afforded any adequate ground for believing, that a valid ministry, or any specific feature in or about the ministry, is an essential mark of a true church, we are entitled, upon the ground of this general principle, positively to aver, that no inference drawn from the subject or character of the ministry can be of itself, and as a general rule, *conclusive* upon the character and standing of the church.

Upon these grounds, the Reformers contended that they ought to begin with considering whether Protestant societies were true churches of Christ, and that in discussing this point some other notes or marks must be fixed upon and applied, some other standard must be adopted, than the mere regularity or irregularity of their ministry; and taking a scriptural view of what was the great fundamental duty of men individually to whom the gospel was preached, viz., to receive the truth in the love of it, and also of what was the most important function of the church, or of believers or professed believers collectively, viz., to hold up and promote the truth or the way of salvation, they made the essential note or mark of a true church, as a visible body or society, to be the profession and maintenance of scriptural views of the great fundamental principles of Christian doctrine. And as it is the manifest duty of all who profess to believe in Christ, and to submit to His authority, to unite together, as they have the means and opportunity, in worshipping God; and as, moreover, the sacraments which Christ appointed are at once the badges or symbols of a Christian profession, and the chief external ordinances which He has prescribed, the administration of these sacraments, according to Christ's appointment, was very generally introduced by the Reformers into their description of the distinguishing characteristics of the true church or churches. And it is a curious proof of the sense then generally entertained over the Protestant world of the importance of these principles, and of the necessity of maintaining them in opposition to the Church of Rome, that even the Church of England, while ani-

mated by a somewhat more hierarchic spirit than any other of the churches of the Reformation (though it should not be forgotten that the Reformers of that church had much less of that spirit than most of their successors), gave the following account of the church in the nineteenth Article:—"The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful, *i.e.*, believing men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."

It was then universally acknowledged, that Protestant principles did not admit of the introduction into the definition of the church, or into the description of what is essential to it, of anything more specific than this as to external ordinances and arrangements. Subjection to lawful pastors, and to the Pope, as Christ's vicar, form, as we have seen, a component part of the Popish definition of the church. But Protestants regarded not only the Pope, but even the lawful, *i.e.*, regular pastors, as not being an *essential* feature of the church, of such intrinsic and paramount importance as to form an indispensable part of the standard by which to settle at once and conclusively, in all circumstances, whether a particular society of professing Christians did or did not form a church of Christ. The Reformers did not admit that this principle was inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine institution of the Christian ministry, or with the obligation incumbent upon professing Christians to be in communion with a regular congregation under the superintendence of a pastor, and of a pastor, if possible, appointed in the ordinary, regular, prescribed way,—*i.e.*, by ordination conferred by those who were pastors before. But they held that, as the means are in some sense to be regarded as subordinate to the end, and as there may be occasionally, in particular circumstances, when perfect regularity in regard to outward arrangements is impracticable, or virtually so, a reference to the end rather than to the means, as the guiding and higher standard, it followed that these two practical conclusions might be deduced from it:—First, that the absence of a regular ministry, appointed in the ordinary prescribed way, or even the absence of a ministry altogether for a time, is not necessarily, and in all circumstances, a sufficient proof of itself that a society of professing Christians is not a church of Christ:—and secondly, that any company of faithful or believing men is entitled to a ministry, since Christ has given the ministry to

the church; and if they are so placed in providence that they cannot have a ministry in the ordinary, regular, prescribed way, are entitled to make a ministry for themselves, and that that ministry, though not a regular, is a valid one.

On these grounds, the Reformers in general contended that any body of Christians who had come, from reading or hearing the word of God, to be convinced of the sinfulness of remaining in the communion of the Church of Rome, were not only entitled but bound to leave it; that they were warranted to form themselves into a distinct society for the worship of God, and the enjoyment of His ordinances; and that if it was impracticable for them, in the circumstances in which they were in providence placed, to get a minister in the ordinary regular way—*i.e.*, one approven and set apart by persons already in the office of the ministry—they were entitled, since they were a *church*, and since Christ had given the ministry to the church, to appoint a minister for themselves, if there was any one among them possessed of the scriptural qualifications, to wait upon his ministry, and to receive the sacraments at his hands, without any apprehension of invalidity. This was the doctrine of the Reformers. I am persuaded that it is in accordance with the views of the church and the ministry, and of their relation to each other, given us in Scripture; and I believe it is implied in, and was intended in substance to be expressed by, the declaration of the Confession, that Christ has *given the ministry*, as well as the oracles and the ordinances, to the Church.

Papists usually deny altogether the distinction which the Reformers were accustomed to make between a regular ministry and a valid ministry; and maintain that no ministry is valid unless it be regular,—*i.e.*, that no man is in any instance, or in any circumstances, entitled to execute the functions of a pastor of a Christian flock, and to administer the ordinances which Christ has appointed for the edification of His church, unless he has been admitted to the ministry in the ordinary regular way. The Reformers maintained the distinction between a regular and a valid ministry, and opposed the Popish principle above stated; and they did so upon the ground which we have explained,—viz., that the ministry was given to the church, and belonged to it, or was in some sense subordinate to it; and that, consequently, the mere matter of regularity, the observance of the ordinary binding rule,

with regard to a point of outward arrangement, must give way, if necessity required it, to the welfare and edification of the church, —to the importance of the church enjoying the right which Christ had given it of having a ministry.

They had also to contend with the Romanists, as we still have, upon the more specific question of what it is that constitutes a *regular ministry*, or what are the qualifications which generally, and in all ordinary circumstances, are necessary to warrant men to enter upon the function of the ministry. Upon *this* point, Romanists have always maintained—and in doing so they have been faithfully followed by High Church Prelatists—that there is no regular admission to the ministry, except what is conferred by episcopal ordination, and this, too, transmitted in regular unbroken succession from the ordination given by the apostles. The Reformers admitted that there are certain regulations indicated in Scripture, with regard to the admission of men to the ministry; that these regulations it was, as a general rule, sinful to neglect, and imperative to regard; and that nothing could, in any instance, warrant the neglect or violation of them, except the necessity, which might arise in certain circumstances, of having respect to the paramount object of the edification of the church. But the Reformers generally denied that, in order even to the *regularity* of a ministry, it was necessary that ordination should have been conveyed by episcopal hands, or should have been transmitted in unbroken succession from the ordinations made by the apostles. They could find nothing in Scripture that seemed to necessitate episcopal ordination, or to require the existence of the episcopal office; and they thought it amply sufficient if men were ordained as Timothy was, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. And with regard to the absolute necessity of an unbroken descent of ordination from the apostles,—a principle which is not to be confounded with that of the necessity of episcopal ordination, though they have commonly gone together, and which *might* be held by a Presbyterian, though I am not ware that any Presbyterian has ever been guilty of such folly,— they maintained that no sanction could be found for it in Scripture; while they also held that it was inconsistent with important scriptural principles, and with the whole scope and spirit of the New Testament arrangements, and was contradicted and disproved by the whole history of the Christian Church.

I proceed now to make some observations upon the scriptural promises in regard to the church, and the bearing of these, according as they are interpreted, upon men's views of the leading features exhibited in the actual history of the church in subsequent ages. The promises of Christ to His church amount in substance to an assurance of His own constant presence with it, and of the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth. Papists allege that these promises imply or secure, not only that the profession of Christianity would soon be widely extended in the world, but also that one widely extended visible society would continue always or uninterruptedly to proclaim the whole truth of God, without any mixture of error. They assert that this has been promised, and that it has been fully realized in the Church of Rome, or in the visible church in communion with the Papal See, and in subjection to the Pope. Protestants maintain that the promises of the constant presence of Christ and of the Spirit in the church do not necessarily bear such a meaning, or lead us to expect such a result; and that they cannot be proved, by any fair principles of interpretation, to mean more than this—that by Christ's presence, and the operation of the Spirit, His church should enjoy and effect all that He intended it to enjoy and effect; that all who were chosen by God to eternal life should be brought to a knowledge and belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, and be trained up to a meetness for heaven; and that, therefore, all who had really entered Christ's service might boldly devote themselves to the advancement of His cause, and to the discharge of all the duties which He might impose upon them, assured that they should suffer no real loss by faithfulness to Him, but would find all things made to work together for their good.

The promises certainly imply this; but as certainly they cannot be proved, in so far as they are clearly applicable to the church generally and permanently, and not merely to the apostles, and the special and infallible guidance which they enjoyed, to imply more than this. The promises of Christ's presence, and of the Spirit's operation in the church, must be viewed in connection with God's *intended* design, so far as we know it, in establishing and preserving a church upon earth. The promises of constant presence and guidance secure *that*, whatever it may be; but they do not of themselves give us any specific information as to what

this design is; nor can they be supposed to secure anything but what was really comprehended in that design. Could it be proved separately and independently from Scripture, that it was Christ's purpose and intention that there should always exist upon earth a widely extended church, or visible society, which should always maintain and proclaim the whole truth of God without mixture of error, then the promised presence of Christ and His Spirit might with propriety be regarded as the pledge and the means of effecting this result. But if no such design can be established by independent evidence, it is vain to expect to establish it by the mere promise of His constant presence and blessing. Christ, by His presence, and the operation of His Spirit, accomplishes, in and by His church, whatever it was His design to accomplish—whatever He has given His church and people reason to expect. Protestants, however, contend not only that Christ has not given us any reason to expect that a widely extended visible church would always be preserved free from any mixture of error, and that *therefore* the promises of His constant presence must not be supposed to secure this; but also, moreover, that He has given us in Scripture plain enough intimations that the visible church would soon, in point of fact, be widely and deeply corrupted; and if such intimations are really to be found in Scripture, which is surely very manifest, then we are bound to conclude that He did not mean us to believe that, by promising His presence and Spirit, He intended to prevent such a result. And if, upon a historical survey of the church, we find that error and corruption, such as these intimations in Scripture would lead us to expect, did in fact appear, then we are to regard this as a fulfilment of prophecy, and, as such, a proof of the divine mission of Christ, and as confirming, or rather establishing, the interpretation put upon the scriptural statements referred to. Protestants believe, as a matter of unquestionable historical certainty, that at a very early period error and corruption—*i.e.*, deviations from the scriptural standard in matters of doctrine, government, worship, and discipline—manifested themselves in the visible church gradually, but rapidly; that this corruption deepened and increased, till it issued at length in a grand apostasy—in a widely extended and well-digested system of heresy, idolatry, and tyranny, which involved in gross darkness nearly the whole of the visible church for almost a thousand years, until it was to some extent dispelled by the light of the Reforma-

tion. They believe that the soundness of this general view of the history of the church can be fully established by undoubted matters of fact, viewed in connection with the plain statements of Scripture. They see nothing in Christ's promises to His church that requires them to disbelieve or to doubt this; and, on the contrary, they find statements in Scripture which seem fitted and intended to lead men to expect some such result.

Sec. IV.—*Different Theories of the History of the Church.*

Papists, in accordance with their interpretation of the promises made to the church, give a totally different view of its actual history. They admit, indeed, that errors and corruptions soon appeared among professed Christians; but then they allege that these errors never infected the church, since she always rejected and condemned the errors, and expelled from her pale those who maintained them. They assert that the Catholic Church, in communion with the see of Rome, has always maintained the apostolic faith pure and uncorrupted, without any mixture of error; that she has never changed her faith or contradicted herself; that all the doctrines she now holds she has maintained stedfastly since the apostolic times, without any variation, although from time to time she has given more full and explicit definitions and explanations regarding them, in opposition to the various heresies that may have been propounded; that she has never at any time degenerated into superstition, idolatry, or tyranny; but has continued through all ages the pure, and meek, and faithful spouse of Christ, and has been constantly acknowledged in that character by all good Catholics, *i.e.*, by all professing Christians, *except* heretics and schismatics. This is the Popish theory of the history of the Church; and, strange as it may seem, there have been not a few Papists of undoubted learning and ability who have elaborately maintained—first, that thus it must have been, for Christ promised it, and His constant presence with His church secured it; and, secondly, that thus it has been, for the voice of history establishes it. Romish writers would probably have been well pleased had they been allowed to confine themselves to the former of these modes of probation, viz., the *à priori* one, just as they like much better to try to prove that there should and must be a living, visible, infallible interpreter of God's will,

than to show that such an interpreter has been actually appointed, and has been always faithfully discharging his duties. But they have not shrunk even from the historical evidence, and have really attempted to establish historically the monstrous theory which has been described.

In regard to the *à priori* proof, Protestants contend, as we have explained, that there is no evidence in Scripture that Christ intended to preserve a widely extended, perpetually visible society upon earth, which should always be free from all error; and still less that He intended to confer this privilege upon the Church of Rome; and that, therefore, the promises of His presence and Spirit do not secure it; nay, that there are clear intimations in Scripture that the history of the visible church would exhibit a very different aspect from what this theory assigns to it,—and more particularly that the Church of Rome would fall into apostasy, and become a mass of corruption, a synagogue of Satan and mystery of iniquity. Protestants, besides, wish to have matters of fact investigated and ascertained by the ordinary evidence applicable to the nature of the case. The character and doctrine of the visible church, or of any of its branches at any particular period, is a matter of fact, to be ascertained by the application of the ordinary principles and materials of historical evidence; and when the character and doctrine of any church or individual has been ascertained in the ordinary way, by appropriate means and evidence applicable to matters of fact, they should be judged of, or estimated, by the standard of the word of God.

Not only can all the peculiarities of the Popish system be proved to be unsanctioned or opposed by the word of God, but many of them can be proved by undoubted historical evidence to have had a much later origin than the apostolic age, and to have been unknown in the primitive church. It is a very bold and daring course, when the advocates of the Church of Rome undertake to establish, by historical evidence, that theory and representation of the church's actual history, which their principles and claims require them to maintain. And yet many have tried it, and brought no small share of learning and ability to bear upon the attempt. The very hardihood of the attempt invests it with a certain measure of interest; and their whole theory of the church's history is so different from that which Protestants support—the whole materials of church history are presented in so

changed an aspect from that in which we have been accustomed to contemplate them, that it becomes an interesting, and, in some respects, a not unprofitable exercise, to give some degree of attention to a Popish history of the church. The great work on ecclesiastical history published soon after the Reformation, and commonly known by the name of the Magdeburgh Centuriators, was written, to a large extent, with the view of bringing the testimony of history to bear against the Church of Rome. The apostasy felt the necessity of giving a different view of the history of the church, and for this purpose the Annals of Cardinal Baronius were prepared. In this great work, the author labours to prove not only that all the doctrines of the Church of Rome have been constantly held by the whole Christian world, except heretics and schismatics, from the apostolic age, but also that all the rites and ceremonies which cumber and deform its worship can be traced back to the same venerable antiquity. Being a defender also of the personal infallibility of the Pope, which all Romanists do not contend for, Baronius was obliged to undertake the desperate task of trying to prove that no Pope had ever contradicted himself or any other Pope, and that no Pope had ever fallen into error or heresy. He frankly admits that some Popes, especially in the ninth and tenth centuries, were men of infamous personal character, and attained to the possession of the chair of Peter by the most disgraceful means; but of course, like every other defender of Papal infallibility, he was obliged to assert, and to try to prove, that not one of them had ever fallen into error or heresy.

The Church of Rome maintains doctrines and advances claims which, even were the word of God less clearly opposed to them all than it is, can be fully tested and overturned by the plain facts of history; and it is a fearful task which her defenders undertake, when they attempt to prove from history that the Bishops of Rome, from Peter downwards, have been, and have been recognised as, the vicars of Christ; have been both *de facto* and *de jure* the monarchs of the visible church; and have always exercised the function of teaching and ruling the church in entire accordance with the mind and will of their Master.

Some Roman Catholics have held principles which have somewhat modified the magnitude and difficulty of the task that devolves upon them in surveying the history of the church. They

have restricted the alleged infallibility to matters of doctrine, and have not thought it necessary to maintain that she has made no changes or innovations in rites and ceremonies, or in matters of discipline. They have asserted the right and power of the church to make changes in these points as she saw cause. They have thought it safer and more expedient to assert this general principle, than to undertake the task of tracing back the whole of the existing rites, ceremonies, and discipline of the Romish Church to the apostolic age. They thus manage to throw off their shoulders a large share of the burden under which poor Baronius groaned. Some also, especially the French writers, who defend what are called the Gallican liberties, deny the personal infallibility of the Pope, ascribing infallibility only to general councils, and of course escape from the necessity of proving that no Pope can contradict himself, or another Pope, or deviate from the standard of orthodoxy. Others, again, like the Jansenists, though not quite prepared to deny the Pope's infallibility in matters of faith, do not extend it to matters of fact, and are thus enabled to be so far honest as to admit, when compelled by satisfactory historical evidence, that Popes may have fallen into mistakes, or even, as no one supposed them to be impeccable, uttered falsehoods.

This theory of the church's history, as implying *at least* the constant preservation of the purity of the visible church in all matters of faith and doctrine, and the actual derivation of all her tenets from the apostolic age, is essentially involved in the principles and claims of the Church of Rome. She cannot abandon it, but must stand or fall with it. She is thus open to a fatal wound from the testimony of history, which she has no means of avoiding but by corrupting or perverting history. Protestants may, and do, derive important assistance in establishing their own principles, and in making out a case against the Church of Rome, from an investigation of the church's history; but they are not essentially dependent upon it, and no assault that can be fatal to their cause can come from that quarter. They do not need, *as Protestants*, or in virtue of the position they occupy as seceders from, and protesters against, the Romish apostasy, to adopt any particular theory of the church's history, and then to labour to silence or pervert the testimony of history, in order to support their theory, or to guard it against objections. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants; and when the

divine origin and authority of the Bible are conceded or proved, Protestants are quite able to deduce from it all the doctrines which they maintain, and to establish them in such a way that no assault from any other quarter, such as the testimony of history, could competently be brought to bear upon them. The Romish Church stands in a different position. She has put forth principles and claims which compel her to maintain a certain theory of the actual history of the church, and a disproof of this theory by an actual investigation of the church's history inflicts upon her whole system a deadly wound. Protestants have thus not the same stake as Papists have in an investigation of the history of the church, for with Papists it is a matter of life or death; and they have, in consequence, brought to bear upon it all the deceivableness of unrighteousness which the Scriptures lead us to expect in that system.

We have described above the course which has been commonly pursued by Popish controversialists in exhibiting the history of the church, and especially in tracing the history of doctrine; and which their well-known and avowed principles require them to pursue. In virtue of the principles they hold with respect to the perpetual visibility and infallibility of the church, they *must* maintain that she has taught the same doctrines without variation in every period of her history; and in virtue of the principle they hold about the authority of tradition, they are bound to maintain, and may be called upon to prove, that all the doctrines which the church now propounds, were delivered by Christ and His inspired apostles, though not at the time committed to writing. No satisfactory proof of an historical kind can be produced, that any of the doctrines of the Church of Rome which are rejected by Protestants, because not sanctioned by Scripture, were delivered orally to the church by Christ or His apostles. There are many of them with respect to which this allegation can be positively disproved, *i.e.*, with respect to which it can be proved that they were unknown to the primitive church, and therefore were not taught by its founders. This has been often shown by Protestant writers, but was never more fully and conclusively established than in the present day, when the history of doctrines has been very thoroughly investigated, especially by German writers.

The manifest impossibility of maintaining the old Popish ground has led some in our own day to have recourse to a new expedient, viz., what is called the theory of *Development*. This theory has

been fully expounded in Dr Newman's Essay on that subject; and applied by him to the vindication of the additions which the Church of Rome has made to the Christianity of the New Testament. It is in substance this, that the doctrines taught by inspired men might be legitimately developed or drawn out in subsequent times into notions which were not contained in, or deducible from, the doctrines themselves, but merely stood related to them in some vague and distant connection. This theory, which is plainly infidel in its bearing and tendency, as virtually denying the supreme authority of an external objective revelation, is somewhat skilfully accommodated to modes of thinking largely prevalent in the present day, when there is a tendency to resolve everything, both in the material and in the moral world, into development; and to give great prominence to the subjective, or to what is found within man himself, as the source and test of what is true. At present we can only observe, that the adoption of this new theory implies an abandonment of the ground which was occupied by all former Popish controversialists, and which the well-known principles of their church required them to occupy. It amounts to a virtual acknowledgment that this ground is untenable. No doubt, the doctrine of the infallibility of the church, if once established, and fairly and fully applied, is quite adequate to cover and to vindicate anything. But the more judicious Popish controversialists are rather afraid of overburdening the doctrine of the infallibility of the church, by imposing upon it more than it is able to bear; and, indeed, they are not fond of resting anything upon it *alone*, without having something else in the way of proof or evidence to relieve and assist it. Some of the more rash and unscrupulous defenders of Popery have held that the infallible authority of the church includes a power of establishing and imposing new articles of faith, which they might perhaps, in accordance with the fashionable phraseology of the present day, call developments of what was taught by inspired men. But the more judicious defenders of Popery have shrunk from taking up this extreme ground; and, besides, the doctrine of the Council of Trent on the subject of tradition plainly commits them to the necessity of maintaining that all their doctrines are contained either in the written word or in the unwritten traditions, and, of course, entitles us to demand of them proof that all they teach is either supported by Scripture, or can be traced up through another channel to the

teaching of Christ or His apostles. It is a curious and characteristic specimen of Popish policy, that the Romish ecclesiastical authorities of this country, while labouring to take advantage of Dr Newman's theory of development, have not ventured very formally either to approve or to repudiate it; while their pretended unity is contradicted by the fact, that some of the leading Romish authorities in the United States have openly denounced it as heretical and dangerous.*

It is the more important to keep these considerations in remembrance in investigating the history of the church, because really the history of the church for fifteen hundred years is, to a large extent, just the history of Popery. The Apostle Paul assures us that, even in his time, the mystery of iniquity was already working; and in every succeeding century we find clearer and clearer traces of these seeds or elements, which, when fully developed, constitute the Popish system. Satan took six or seven hundred years to develop and bring to full maturity what has been justly described as his great masterpiece; and indeed some of the peculiarities of Popery were not devised till the middle ages, when the great body of the visible church was sunk in gross darkness, superstition, and idolatry. Even since the Reformation, the condition and efforts of the Papacy have exerted no small influence upon the general state of the professing church. In the present day, it is exerting more influence than it has done for a long period; and there is good ground to believe that that apostate and antichristian system will henceforth continue to hold a most prominent and influential place in the history of the visible church, even until the Lord shall consume it with the breath of His mouth, and destroy it with the brightness of His coming.

There is, indeed, something dark and mysterious in the survey of the history of the church of Christ, in its so soon losing its purity, and falling into error and corruption; and in this error and corruption gaining such an ascendency, and virtually overspreading the visible church for nearly a thousand years.† And Papists take advantage of this circumstance, and appeal to men whether they can believe *that*, considering the promises of Christ's constant

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* Review of Newman in *North British Review*, vol. v. Discussions on Church Principles, p. 35.—Edrs. Wordsworth's Letters to M. Gondon; Let. i. *Bulwark*, vol. ii., pp. 159 and 216.

† Isaac Taylor, 'Ancient Christianity,' vol. i., No. 4.

presence and Spirit,—*can* believe, that this is a correct view of the leading features in the church's history. But we deny that there is anything in these premises sufficient to prove, *à priori*, that this could not be: we find in Scripture other intimations, leading us to expect that it would be; we feel it to be our duty to judge of the truth of doctrines only by the standard of God's word, and of the truth of facts only by their appropriate historical evidence. We are not able to fathom the plans and purposes of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. But we can see enough in the history of God's dealings with men before the manifestation of His Son in the flesh, to convince us that there is nothing in the Protestant view of the history of the Christian church in the least inconsistent with the analogy of the divine procedure, or with the great principles which have all along regulated God's communication to them of spiritual blessings; and we cannot doubt that, in regard to this as in regard to any other department of His dealings with men, the Lord will yet more fully manifest to His people His manifold wisdom and His unshaken faithfulness.

CHAPTER II.

THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM.

Sec. I.—*Scripture Narrative.*

ALTHOUGH our review of Theological Discussions properly begins at the close of the apostolic age, yet there is one transaction recorded in the New Testament to which it may be proper to advert, from its intimate connection with the whole subsequent history and government of the church, and with the controversies to which they have given rise, many of them continuing down to the present day. I allude to what is commonly called the Council of Jerusalem, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

There has been a very great deal of discussion about the true character of this transaction, and the lessons, if any, which it is fitted to suggest respecting the government of the church in subsequent ages. Papists, Prelates, and Presbyterians have usually held that it was fitted and intended to convey some instruction as to the way and manner in which the government of the church should be permanently conducted, and have all professed to find in it something to favour their respective systems; while Congregationalists, not being able to find in it anything to favour *their* views of church government, have generally contented themselves with maintaining that it does not afford any very clear or certain materials for determining in what way the government of the church should be conducted in subsequent ages.* Papists, finding it recorded here that Peter took a prominent part in the discussion

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* Books and references on the Council at Jerusalem :—

Moshemii Institutiones Majores, p. 263. Commentarii, pp. 155, 169.

Buddaeus, Ecclesia Apostolica, c. iv.

Buddaeus, Isagoge, Lib. ii., c. v., sec. iii., p. 741.

Parker, De Politica Ecclesiastica, Lib. iii., c. xiii.

Boëhmeri Dissertationes Juris Ec-

which arose upon this occasion, adduce the narrative as a proof that he acted then, was entitled to act, and was recognised as entitled to act, as the vicar of Christ and the head of the church. Prelatists, finding that, several centuries afterwards, the notion was broached that James was appointed by the apostles Bishop of Jerusalem, profess to get scriptural evidence of this fancy in the prominent part which *he* took in the discussion. There is not in the narrative a trace of any *superiority in office or jurisdiction* on the part either of Peter or James; so that the substance of the Popish argument is virtually this,—Peter spoke *first*, and therefore he was superior in authority and jurisdiction to the other apostles; while the Prelatic argument is,—James spoke *last*, and gave shape to the decision of the council, and therefore he was diocesan bishop, and, as such, superior in some respects even to the apostles. This, of course, is sheer trifling; and the only question of real importance or difficulty connected with this matter, lies between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists or Independents.

The Congregationalists usually contend that this transaction was so peculiar and extraordinary as to afford no pattern or precedent for the disposal of theological controversies, and the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in subsequent ages, and in ordinary circumstances;* while Presbyterians deny this, and allege that it affords a warrant for the general substance of some of the leading features of Presbyterian church government. The question whether or not the transaction was so peculiar and extraordinary

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clesiastici Antiqui; Diss. iii., pp. 98, 218, commented on by Mosheim, Inst. Maj. 264.

Rutherford, Peaceable Plea, c. xiv., p. 199.

Rutherford, Due Right of Presbyteries, pp. 355–380, *et seq.*

Divine Right of Church Government. Jus Div. Reg. Eccles. By London Ministers, c. xiv. and xv.

Wood's Answer to Lockyer, and books referred to there. Part ii., sec. viii., p. 302.

Cotton's Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, c. vi. and c. vii., Prop. iv.

Gillespie's Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland.

Brown's Vindication of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government; Let. viii. and xii.

Carson's Reply to do.; Let. x.

Davidson's Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament; Lect. vii.

Wardlaw on Congregational Independency, c. vi.

Heidegger, in his 'Libertas Christianorum a Lege Cibaria,' gives a full commentary upon the whole chapter.

*Others besides Congregationalists have sanctioned this view. Dr Pusey contends that, "being the result of full inspiration, it forms no precedent at all."—The Councils of the Church, c. i., p. 33.

as to afford no model or precedent for the subsequent government of the church, is virtually identical with this one,—whether the apostles acted *in this matter* as inspired and infallible expounders of the will of God, or simply as the ordinary office-bearers of the church, using the ordinary means of ascertaining the divine will, and enjoying only the ordinary guidance and influences of His Spirit.

Presbyterians contend that there are plain indications in the New Testament that the apostles sometimes acted in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, not as inspired men directed by the infallible guidance of the Spirit which they enjoyed in declaring truth and in organizing the church, but simply as ordinary office-bearers in co-operation with other elders, and more especially that they acted in this capacity merely in this case; and Congregationalists, not absolutely denying, and yet not prepared to admit, that they never acted in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs without infallible guidance, strenuously contend that in this case they acted under the influence of immediate supernatural inspiration, which infallibly guided them to a right decision, and that therefore it affords no model or precedent for the church in future times.* It seems very manifest, from the whole scope and strain of the narrative, that the apostles did *not* act here as inspired and infallible men, but simply as ordinary ecclesiastical office-bearers, in conjunction with the elders or ordinary pastors. Had it been the purpose of God to settle the controversy which arose about the necessity of circumcision by an inspired infallible decision, the apostles might have at once decided it without meeting, and without discussion of any kind; or any one of them might have done so in the exercise of his apostolic authority, and confirmed his decision by the "signs of an apostle." Paul himself might have done so at Antioch, without the matter being brought up to Jerusalem at all. This was not done; the matter *was* brought up to the church at Jerusalem. The apostles and elders assembled to deliberate upon it publicly in the presence of the people; and we are expressly told that much disputing took place regarding it, when they were assembled to decide it. The apostles who took part in the discussion, in place of at once declaring authoritatively

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* Wardlaw on Congregational Independency, p. 278. Davidson on the Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament; Lect. viii., p. 317.

what was the mind and will of God regarding it, formally argued the question upon grounds derived at once from God's providential dealings, and from statements contained in the Old Testament Scriptures. In this way, and by this process, they carried conviction to the understandings of all who heard them, so that they concurred at length in an unanimous decision. Here everything plainly indicates, and seems to have been obviously intended to indicate, that inspiration was not in exercise, but that the matter was decided by means accessible to men in general under the ordinary guidance of the Spirit.

There is no evidence, indeed—and the Congregationalists found much on this consideration—that *any of the apostles* were, even at the first, of a different mind from that in which the whole assembly ultimately concurred, or that they had any disputing among themselves; but it is certain—and this is sufficient to warrant our conclusiou—that there was much disputing, *i.e.*, arguing on opposite sides, in the assembly *in their presence;* and that they did not put an end to this disputing by an immediate and infallible declaration of the mind of God upon the point, in the exercise of their apostolic authority, but by ordinary arguments derived from admitted principles, and addressed to the understandings of those who heard them. The only thing that appears to contradict the conclusion to which the whole scope and strain of the narrative obviously points, is the fact that the decision to which the assembly ultimately came is announced in these words: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Now, this statement certainly implies that they were confident that the decision was *de facto* in accordance with the mind of the Holy Ghost, but it does not *necessarily* imply more than this; and therefore it should not be held to imply more, as it would then contradict the general scope and strain of the narrative, which are plainly fitted to teach us that Christ, the Head of the church, determined the disposal of this matter, not by direct and infallible inspiration, but by a general meeting of apostles and elders seeking and attaining the truth upon the point, by means accessible to men in general with the ordinary influences of the Spirit. Not only does the expression, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," not necessarily imply more than the certain accordance *de facto* between the decision given by them and the mind of the Spirit, but it seems of itself to indicate that there was

something in the case different from a mere declaration of what they knew simply as inspired men. It seems much more natural, that if they had been simply declaring what they had been miraculously and supernaturally taught upon the point by the Spirit, they would have said only, "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost;" the addition, "and to us," having the appearance of intimating that they did not act in the matter merely and solely as the inspired declarers of His mind, though confident that their decision was accordant with His.

We hold it, then, to be clear, that while the apostles ordinarily had the gift of supernatural infallible inspiration in the discharge of their public duties, in declaring the truth and in organizing the church, yet on this occasion they did not, in point of fact, exercise this gift, but left it as it were in abeyance, and acted in the matter just as uninspired men might and could have done. Now, these two facts, taken in combination, not only prove that this transaction may afford a pattern and precedent for the proceedings of the church ordinarily in similar circumstances, but also warrant us to believe that it was expressly arranged in this way for that very purpose, and that therefore it is the church's duty to apply it for the regulation of her conduct. We assume now, then, that the view generally taken by Congregationalists, as to this controversy having been decided by a supernatural exercise of infallible inspiration, is erroneous. We assume that the whole transaction must have been intended, and of course fitted, to convey instruction and direction to the church as to the management of its affairs; and we proceed to inquire what particular instructions or directions it does convey.

Sec. II.—*The Rule of Church Power.*

This transaction, and the record of it which has been transmitted to us, are fitted to remind us of the great scriptural principle, that the sole standard by which the affairs of the church ought to be regulated is the revealed will of God. The question upon this occasion was, whether Gentile converts should be required to be circumcised, and to keep the ceremonial law. The apostles and elders, when met to consider this point, evidently had it for their sole object to ascertain what was the mind and will of God concerning it; and they looked to no other standard

but this. None but God was entitled really to decide this question, and no certain materials for deciding it aright could be derived from any other quarter. Accordingly, they directed their attention to the sources from which the will of God might be learned, and examined *them*. They considered, indeed, both the providence of God and the word of God; for we find that Peter, in his statement, founded mainly upon what God had actually done in the case of Cornelius, upon the evidence of the fact that His Spirit had been then and there communicated; while James appealed to statements contained in the writings of the prophets. The written word of God is, properly speaking, the only standard by which the affairs of the church ought to be regulated, though much is also to be learned from carefully considering His providence, or what He has actually done, in connection with the statements of His word; the example of Peter in this matter especially affording us warrant and encouragement to give careful attention to any evidence that may be presented to us of God having poured out His Spirit upon any occasion for the conversion of sinners.

The Church is represented in Scripture as the kingdom of Christ. He alone is its King; and He has established and promulgated in His word its constitution and laws, as well as made provision for the ordinary application of these laws to the permanent regulation of its affairs, as a distinct organized society *in* the world, but not *of* the world. He has commissioned none to make laws for His kingdom; He has done this Himself, as a Son over His own house. He has indicated His will as to the way in which the affairs of His kingdom are to be permanently administered, and he has committed the application and execution of the laws He has established to the church itself. He has authorized no civil or secular authority to interfere in the regulation of the affairs of His kingdom; and therefore it is at once unlawful for them to interfere, and for the church either to be a consenting party to their interference, or to pay any regard to their mere enactments or requirements. He has laid down the laws of His kingdom in His word, and therefore the church is bound to be guided wholly by His word in the execution of the functions which He has conferred, and in the discharge of the duties which He has imposed upon her; and with that view, she is called upon to bring everything to that standard, and to make it her sole object

in regard to every question that comes before her, to ascertain what is the mind and will of Christ concerning it. The church is not only not bound to be guided by any other rule or standard, but is not at liberty to have regard to any other; as this would be virtually to withdraw herself from subjection to Christ's authority, and voluntarily to submit to a foreign yoke. No mere laws or statutes of men,—no mere regard to worldly or secular advantages,—should ever regulate the conduct of the church of Christ, or of any section or branch of it. She should be guided solely by the revealed will of Christ, and she should ascertain what that will is by diligent and prayerful study of His word.

When this great principle is explained and enforced, men who, from whatever cause, dislike and shrink from it, but who do not venture openly and directly to dispute it, usually attempt to evade it, and to escape from the practical application of it, by questioning whether there are, in point of fact, materials in God's word for deciding many of those disputes that arise in connection with the administration of the affairs of the church.

This notion, as it is often exhibited, is little else than a pretence for escaping from the supremacy of God's word without formally denying its authority. But the truth is, that God fitted and intended His word to be a full and adequate guide to His church in the execution of its functions, and in the discharge of all its duties, and to His people individually in everything bearing upon their relation to God and their eternal destiny; and it is very certain, that if men were really willing to submit to the authority of Christ as the supreme and only lawgiver,—if they were really anxious to know His will that they might do it, and if they would diligently and prayerfully search His word, they would find materials there for regulating their opinions and conduct in all circumstances much more fully and completely than they might anticipate. It has been remarked—and the remark, we think, is equally just and important—that many of the applications made in the New Testament of Old Testament statements seem to have been intended, besides their direct and immediate object, to convey this general lesson, that much more is to be learnt from the Old Testament—and, of course, from the Scriptures generally—than might at first sight appear. Men desirous to evade or abridge the authority of Scripture, in its practical applications, seem to think that they are not called upon to regard anything but what appears

plainly and palpably upon the surface of Scripture, and is set forth there in distinct and explicit assertions or requirements. But the mode of applying Old Testament statements frequently adopted by our Saviour and His apostles, points to a very different conclusion. We have a specimen of this in the statement made by James on the occasion we are considering. There was nothing very direct and express in the Old Testament upon the precise question to be decided; and the way in which he does decide it, by an application of Old Testament statements, is one of the many instances of a similar kind, occurring in the New Testament, which are fitted to impress upon us the conviction, that much more is to be learnt from the written word than what can be found on the surface of it,—much which cannot be discovered and brought out without a large amount of study and meditation;—and that the Bible is fitted and intended, when rightly used and improved, to be far more extensively useful and effectual, as a rule or standard of faith and practice, than men commonly suppose or experience.

Sec. III.—*Authority of Church Officers.*

The inspired record of this Council of Jerusalem plainly sanctions the Presbyterian principle of the right of the office-bearers of the church, as distinguished from the ordinary members, to decide judicially any disputes that may arise about the affairs of the church,—to be the ordinary interpreters and administrators of Christ's laws for the government of His house. It is quite plain, from the inspired narrative, that the apostles and elders, or presbyters—*i.e.*, the office-bearers of the church—alone composed the Council; that they exclusively were its constituent members, and that they alone formally and judicially decided upon the point brought before them. It is true that the brethren—*i.e.*, the Christian people—generally were present, that they were consulted, and that they concurred in the decision; and the place which they occupied in the matter will be afterwards adverted to. But it is certain that the apostles and elders alone composed the Council, and alone formally pronounced the decision. We have the regular formal minute of sederunt, as it might be called, in the sixth verse, where we are told that "the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter;" and at the fourth verse of the sixteenth chapter, the decrees of the Council are expressly described as "the

decrees that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem;" and these decrees, it is manifest, were authoritative or binding upon the churches. There is, indeed, a clear distinction kept up in the New Testament between the office-bearers and the ordinary members of the church: the one class being described as rulers and governors, and of course being invested with a certain kind and degree of authority; and the other being bound to render a certain measure and degree of submission and obedience.

There are some obvious and important limitations of the authority to be exercised by the one party, and of the obedience to be rendered by the other.

First, The authority of the office-bearers, while restricted exclusively to the affairs of the church,—to the administration of the ordinary necessary business of Christ's house,—is even there not lordly, or legislative, or discretionary, but purely ministerial, to be exercised in Christ's name, *i.e.*, in entire subjection to His authority and to His word. Christ is the church's only King and Head; and this implies that its affairs must be regulated by His mind and will revealed in His word. The constitution and laws of His kingdom have been fixed by Him, and cannot by any human or uninspired authority be altered, abrogated, or extended. The office-bearers of the church are not lords over God's heritage: they have no dominion over men's faith; they have no jurisdiction over the conscience; they are the mere interpreters of Christ's word, the mere administrators of the laws which He has enacted.

Secondly, Even within their proper sphere of simply interpreting and administering Christ's laws—*i.e.*, applying them to the actual regulation of the affairs of the church as occasion may require—the office-bearers of the church are not, as Papists allege, infallible, so as to be entitled to exact implicit and unquestioning obedience. No such privilege has been promised to, or conferred upon, them; and to claim it, is to put themselves in Christ's stead, and to usurp dominion over the conscience.

Thirdly, The office-bearers of the church have no *exclusive* right to interpret Christ's laws. Upon scriptural and Protestant principles, every man has the right of private judgment,—*i.e.*, he is entitled to interpret the word of God for himself upon his own responsibility, for the regulation of his own opinions and conduct, for the execution of his own functions and the discharge of his own duties, *whatever these may be;* and Christ has conferred upon

no class of men any power that interferes with the exercise of this right. This right of private judgment belongs to all men in their different capacities, public and private, and ought to be exercised by them with a view to the discharge of their own duties and functions, whatever these may be. Civil rulers are, on this ground, entitled and bound to interpret the word of God for themselves, with a view to the right discharge of any duties, competent to them in their own sphere and province, with respect to which the word of God affords any data for decision; and every private individual enjoys the same right or privilege. The same principle, in this general mode of stating it, applies equally to ecclesiastical office-bearers; but in their case it must be viewed in connection with this additional Scripture truth, that they are Christ's ordinance for the ordinary government of His visible church,—that it is *their* function and duty, while it is *not* the function and duty of any other party, to administer His laws for the management of the ordinary necessary business of His church,—for deciding and regulating all those matters which require to be regulated and decided wherever a church of Christ exists and is in full operation. This being their function and duty, they are of course entitled and bound to interpret the word of God for themselves, in the exercise of their own judgment, and upon their own responsibility, for the execution and discharge of it. Christ has not vested the government of His church—*i.e.*, the management of its ordinary necessary business—either in civil rulers or in the body of ordinary members; and therefore they are not entitled to interpret the word of God *for the purpose of executing this function*. He has vested the ordinary administration of the affairs of His church in ecclesiastical office-bearers; and to them, therefore, and to them alone, belongs the right of interpreting and applying *His laws for the attainment of this object, the accomplishment of this end*. In so far as the decisions of ecclesiastical office-bearers affect other men collectively or individually, these men are fully entitled to judge for themselves whether or not the decisions pronounced are in accordance with the mind and will of Christ; and by the judgment which they form upon this point to regulate their own conduct, in so far as they have any function to execute, or any duty to discharge. But since the judicial determination of the office-bearers of the church is the only ordinary provision which Christ has made for administering the affairs of His church,

no party is entitled to interfere authoritatively with them in the execution of this function; and all parties, while exercising their own right of private judgment, ought to regard the decisions of the ordinary and only competent authorities in the matter with a certain measure of respect and deference—at least to this extent, that if they do resolve to condemn and disobey the decisions, they ought to be very sure that these decisions are opposed to the mind and will of Christ, and that, therefore, they may confidently appeal from the decision of the office-bearers to the tribunal of the Head of the church Himself.

With the limitations, and in the sense, now explained, it is a scriptural principle which has always been held by Presbyterians, in opposition to Independents or Congregationalists, that the government of the church—the ordinary administration of Christ's laws, the judicial determination of any questions that may arise, and that may require to be decided in the ordinary management of the business of His house—is vested, not in the body of the people, or the ordinary members, but in the office-bearers of His church; that they constitute the only regular and ordinary tribunal for the decision and regulation of these matters; that therefore their decisions should be treated with respect and obedience, unless they be contrary to the mind and will of God; and that men who refuse to obey them are bound to be well satisfied, upon good scriptural grounds, that they can confidently appeal to Christ against the sentence pronounced in His name upon earth.

It is the doctrine of our church, as set forth in the Confession of Faith,* that "the decrees and determination" of Synods and Councils, "if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereto in His word." Without giving a full exposition of this general principle, I merely observe that it may be regarded as comprehending the three following positions:—

First, That all the decrees and determinations of Councils or Church Courts should be regulated by the word of God.

Secondly, That they are to be received with reverence and submission only *when* they are consonant with the word of God;

* Chap. xxxi., sec. 3.

and that of this, of course, every one is entitled and bound to judge for himself on his own responsibility.

Thirdly, That when they are consonant with the word, regard should be had, in the feelings with which they are contemplated, and in the way in which they are treated, not only to the fact of their accordance with the word, but also to the fact that they are righteous and scriptural decisions of a legitimate authority, rightfully exercised; that they are instances of the right working of a provision which God has made, of an ordinance which He has appointed for the administration of the affairs of His church. The ordinary provision which God has made, for settling public controversies and regulating the ordinary necessary business of His church, is by the public deliberations and decisions (according to His word) of the ordinary office-bearers; and when, through His blessing, this provision operates rightly, and brings out results which are consonant with the word, men are called upon to recognise the wisdom and goodness of God in appointing such an ordinance, and in guiding it, *upon this particular occasion*, to a right and scriptural result, and to contemplate and receive the result with the reverence and submission which the realization of the truth that this is an ordinance of God appointed thereto in His word is evidently fitted to call forth.

Sec. IV.—*The Place of Church Members.*

The history of the council suggests to us, that, in important ecclesiastical matters, the Christian people, or the ordinary members of the church, though not possessed of a judicial or authoritative voice in determining them, ought to be consulted; that the merits of the case ought to be expounded to them, and that their consent and concurrence should, if possible, be obtained. There is a very marked distinction kept up through the whole of the narrative we are now considering, as well as through the New Testament in general, between the position and functions of the apostles and elders, or of the office-bearers, on the one hand, and of the people or ordinary members on the other. The assembly, as we have seen, was composed properly and formally only of the apostles and elders; and its decisions were, as they are expressly called by the inspired historian, "the decrees that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem." All this is

very plain,—so plain, that it cannot be explained away; and therefore what is said or indicated of the place and standing of the people or ordinary members, must, if possible, be so interpreted as to be consistent with this.

What, then, is here said of the people; and what does it fairly and naturally imply? They are mentioned for the first time in the twelfth verse, where we are told that "all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul." This, of course, implies that they were present, but it implies nothing more; and, for anything that appears here, they might have been mere spectators and auditors, without having anything more to do with the matter. They are next mentioned in the twenty-second verse, where we are told that "it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, *συν ὅλῃ τῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ*, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch." Now, the way in which they are here introduced, plainly implies that they did not stand upon the same platform in the matter with the apostles and elders, and that they had not the same place and standing in this, any more than in the preceding part, of the transaction which the office-bearers had. It *does* imply, however, that *after* the apostles and elders had made up their minds as to what was the mind and will of God in this matter, and what decision should be pronounced, the subject was brought before the people,—that they were called upon to attend to it, to exercise their judgment upon it, and to make up their mind regarding it. It implies that all this was done, and that, as the result of it, the brethren were convinced of the justice and soundness of the decision, and expressed their concurrence in it, as well as in the practical step by which it was followed up, of sending chosen men of their company to Antioch. *All this having taken place*, it was perfectly natural that the public letter addressed upon the subject to the Gentile churches, should run in the name of the whole body of those who at Jerusalem had adopted or concurred in the decision or judgment pronounced; and, accordingly, we find at the twenty-second verse, that this letter runs in the name of "the apostles, and elders, and brethren." There is no reasonable ground to doubt the correctness of the representation we have given of the actual facts or *res gestae* of the case, as indicated by the narrative, up till the time of the preparation of this letter; and if it be correct, then the mere introduction of the brethren, *along* with the apostles and elders, into the letter, cannot be fairly

held to indicate, as it certainly does not necessarily imply, that the brethren formed a constituent part of the assembly, or that they had acted with anything like judicial authority, as the apostles and elders had done, in deciding upon the question.

Some Presbyterians, afraid that this introduction of the brethren into the letter along with the apostles and elders, might sanction the idea, that ordinary members of the church had some judicial authority in deciding controversies as well as the office-bearers, have tried to show that the brethren mentioned here are not the same parties as the whole church mentioned in the preceding verse, but rather the presbyters, or elders, who were not pastors or teachers. But this, I think, is a forced and unnatural interpretation, unwarranted by anything in the passage itself, and unnecessary to the end for the promotion of which it has been devised. Presbyterians have always denied, upon good and sufficient grounds, that Scripture assigns to the ordinary members of the church anything like judicial authority in the decision of controversies, or in the ordinary administration of the general government of the church. But they have very generally admitted, on the ground of what is contained in this chapter and in other parts of the New Testament, that, in important ecclesiastical questions, the nature and merits of the case, and the grounds and reasons of the judgment, should, in so far as circumstances allowed of it, be laid before the ordinary members of the church; and that their consent and concurrence should, if possible, be obtained. Presbyterians, indeed, have never assigned to the ordinary members of the church, because they could see no warrant in Scripture for doing so, the same distinct and definite place and influence in the ordinary regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in general, as they have ascribed to them in the appointment of their own office-bearers; in other words, they have never held their consent or concurrence in the decisions pronounced by the office-bearers in the ordinary regulation of ecclesiastical affairs to be necessary or indispensable, so that the withholding or refusal of their consent nullified or invalidated the judgment, or formed a bar in the way of its taking practical effect.

Upon distinct and specific scriptural grounds bearing upon this particular subject, Presbyterians have usually held that the consent or concurrence of the ordinary members of the church is necessary or indispensable in the appointment of their office-

bearers, so that the withholding or refusal of their consent or concurrence is an insuperable bar to the formation of the pastoral relation. But, while they have maintained this principle upon *special* scriptural grounds, bearing upon this particular topic of the election of office-bearers, they have usually denied that either this, or anything else contained in Scripture, afforded any sufficient ground for assigning to the ordinary members of the church so high and definite a standing and influence in the ordinary government of the church, or in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in general. They have, however, generally admitted that, in important questions affecting the welfare and peace of the church, the people should be consulted, and that their consent and concurrence should, if possible, be secured by the fair use of scriptural arguments addressed to their understandings.

The Presbyterians of this country about the time of the Westminster Assembly, had perhaps somewhat higher and more aristocratic ideas of the power and authority of ecclesiastical office-bearers and church courts than had been generally entertained by the Reformers of the preceding century;* not that there was any very marked or definite difference in opinion or doctrinal statement between them on this subject, but that there was a somewhat different impression produced by the controversy in which, at the later of these two periods, Presbyterians were engaged with the Independents,—a disposition to keep rather at a distance from anything that might seem to favour Congregationalism. Accordingly, there is nothing direct or explicit upon the subject of the place and standing of the people in the general regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, as distinguished from their influence or privilege in the election of their office-bearers,—nothing, indeed, but the general statement formerly explained, that Christ has given the ministry to the church,—contained in any of our authorized standard books prepared at that time. But, at the same time, it is certain that the leading Presbyterians of that period held the principle about the consultation and concurrence of the people which we are now illustrating; and that they ordinarily acted upon it in practice.

* The Theological Faculty of Utrecht thought that too high ground was taken on some points connected with this subject in Gillespie's (cxi.) Propositions. *Vide* "Voetii Politica Ecclesiastica," P. i., Lib. i., tract ii., c. vii., tom. i., p. 246. The Faculty consisted at this time of Voetius, de Maets, and Hoornbeeck, and the judgment prepared by Voetius was signed by them.

As this point has been very much overlooked in modern times, it may be proper briefly to adduce some evidence of the statement which has now been made. In 1641, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland sent a letter to their Presbyterian brethren in England, who had asked their opinion in regard to the Congregational scheme of church government, which contained the following passage:—"Not only the solemn execution of ecclesiastical power and authority, but the whole exercises and acts thereof, do properly belong unto the officers of the kirk; *yet* so that, in matters of chiefest importance, the tacit consent of the congregation be had before their decrees and sentences receive final execution." We have statements to the same effect published in the same year by Alexander Henderson and George Gillespie,—the one the most influential actor, and the other the most learned and conclusive reasoner, among the great men who adorned our church at that important era in her history. In the work entitled "The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland," intended to give an account to Englishmen of the ordinary practice of our church, Henderson says, "Nothing useth to be done by the lesser or greater presbytery—*i.e.*, the kirk-session or the presbytery—in ordering the public worship, in censuring of delinquents, or bringing them to public repentance, but according to the settled order of the church, and with express or tacit consent of the congregation."* And Gillespie, in his treatise entitled "An Assertion of the Government of the Church of Scotland," has the following statement: "It is objected (by Independents) that what concerneth all, ought to be done with the consent of all. Answer, *We hold the same;* but the consent of all is one thing, the exercise of jurisdiction by all, another thing." And, in commenting upon the council of Jerusalem, he gives the same view of this point as we have done, saying, "The apostles and elders met, sat, and voiced apart from the whole church, and they alone judged and decreed. In the meanwhile were matters made known to the whole church, and done with the consent of all. . . . . The brethren are mentioned (along with the apostles and elders), because it was done with their knowledge, consent, and applause."†

These were the views entertained upon this subject by the men to whom we are indebted for the standards of our church, who

* P. 39. † Pp. 117-118.

held that they were sanctioned by the inspired narrative of the council at Jerusalem, while they held also that neither this, nor any other portion of the New Testament, warranted or required the ascription to the people of any higher place or standing than this in the ordinary administration of ecclesiastical affairs.*

Sec. V.—*Subordination of Church Courts.*

There is another principle of church government which Presbyterians have generally regarded as sanctioned by the transaction recorded in this chapter—viz., what is called the subordination of courts; or, to adopt the phraseology of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Form of Church Government, the right of synodical assemblies to exercise authority or jurisdiction over congregational and classical assemblies, *i.e.*, over what we now call kirk-sessions and presbyteries,—their right to receive appeals in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same. The scriptural warrant for classical assemblies or presbyteries is, that there are clear instances in Scripture in which the whole body of the Christians of a particular place—as at Jerusalem and Ephesus, where there must have been more than one congregation—are spoken of as a church, or one church, which they could be only as being under one and the same presbyterial government, having a joint or common body of ecclesiastical office-bearers, who presided over them, and regulated their common ecclesiastical affairs. The chief direct warrant which Presbyterians profess to find in Scripture for synodical assemblies, or higher courts invested with some measure of authority over congregational and classical assemblies or elderships, is this synod or council at Jerusalem; and I have no doubt that it does give countenance to the general idea on which the Presbyterian principle of a subordination of courts is based. The whole transaction here recorded, viewed in its complex character, naturally and obviously wears the aspect of the church at Antioch referring an important and difficult question, because of its importance and difficulty, and because of its affecting the interests of the whole church, to the church of Jerusalem, as to a superior authority; and of that church accordingly entertaining the reference, and giving

* *Vide* Discussions on Church Principles, p. 383, etc.—EDRS.

an authoritative decision upon the subject referred to them. This, we say, is naturally and obviously the general character and aspect of the transaction here recorded; and as there is nothing in the particular statements of the narrative inconsistent with, or exclusive of, this view, this must be held to be the general idea or principle which, if the transaction was really fitted to furnish a model or precedent for the government of the church in subsequent ages, it was intended to sanction. And if this was really the general character of the transaction, then it is plain that, if the church at Antioch, instead of referring the matter to the church at Jerusalem, had themselves given a decision upon it, as they might have done, it would have been equally competent for the minority in the church at Antioch (for we know there was a division there) to have appealed to the church at Jerusalem to review, and, if they saw cause, to reverse the decision.

While this is the idea or principle which the transaction, *in its general aspect*, naturally and obviously suggests and countenances, there is no real weight in the attempts which have been made by Congregationalists and others to overturn or escape from the conclusion. There are two positions upon this point which, with this view, and for this purpose, the opponents of Presbyterian principles have laboured to establish: first, that the decision of the council at Jerusalem was not binding, as possessed of any proper authority, but was a mere counsel or advice, having only a moral weight or influence; and, secondly, that even if the decision were binding or authoritative, the council at Jerusalem did not stand to the church at Antioch, or to other churches, in a relation at all similar or analogous to that of a superior authority to an inferior one, as being possessed of higher and wider jurisdiction. That the decision was binding and authoritative, and was not merely a counsel or advice coming from a party whose judgment was entitled to much moral weight, seems very plain from the whole strain of the narrative, and especially from the twenty-eighth verse, where the council says, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, *to lay upon you* no greater burden than these necessary things;" and from the fourth verse of the sixteenth chapter, where it plainly appears that "the decrees which were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem" were promulgated and prescribed as laws binding upon all the churches. This last circumstance—viz., that the decrees were imposed not only upon the church at Antioch, but

upon all other churches likewise, overturns another view which has been propounded, intermediate between that which describes the decision as an authoritative judgment, and that which represents it as a mere counsel or advice. It has been contended by Böehmer*—a very learned German jurist, who has thrown much light upon some important topics in ecclesiastical history and ecclesiastical jurisprudence, though he was a strenuous defender of Erastian principles—that this question was referred by the church at Antioch to the church at Jerusalem simply in the way of arbitration, or, as he says, *per modum compromissi*,—any obligation which might attach to the one party to obey the decision being based *wholly* upon their own voluntary act, in agreeing to submit it to the determination of the other. The narrative exhibits no trace of anything like a voluntary submission to arbitration on the part of the church at Antioch; and this, therefore, is a mere gratuitous assumption, devised to serve a purpose, while the imposition of the decrees upon other churches, equally with the church at Antioch, proves that this was *not* the character of the transaction.

The generality of Congregationalists, who maintain that this whole transaction affords no direct pattern or model for the permanent government of the church, on the ground that the decision was pronounced by the apostles in the exercise of their apostolic authority, under infallible supernatural guidance, cannot of course adopt the first mode of overthrowing the Presbyterian conclusion, and commonly have recourse to the second position which we have mentioned—viz., that the church of Jerusalem did not stand to the church of Antioch in a relation *at all* similar or analogous to that of a supreme authority to a subordinate one, or of a higher to a lower church court; or, more generally, that the council at Jerusalem did not possess those qualities or attributes which Presbyterians require as necessary to warrant and legitimate the exercise of a supreme controlling authority on the part of synodical assemblies. Now, it must be admitted in fairness that some zealous Presbyterian writers have gone beyond what the inspired narrative warrants in making out a virtual identity, or very complete similarity, between the Council of Jerusalem and modern synodical assemblies. More particularly, it must be admitted that

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* Dissertationes Juris Ecclesiastici Antiqui; Diss. III., p. 218, commented on by Mosheim in his "Instit. Maj.," p. 262.

we have no evidence that any other churches were present, or were represented in this council, except those of Antioch and Jerusalem; and that thus the council cannot be shown to correspond fully with the modern idea of a synodical assembly or supreme church court, formally representing, and *simply because representing* a considerable number of particular churches, exercising authority or jurisdiction over them. But notwithstanding this concession, Presbyterians contend, and we think with good reason, that the *general principle or idea* of a representative character or standing, and of a *corresponding* jurisdiction or right of exercising judicial control, is sufficiently indicated and maintained by the general position of the church at Jerusalem, and especially of the apostles who resided there, and regulated and administered its affairs.

The apostles, whether regarded as inspired and infallible teachers, or merely as ordinary office-bearers, had, it will not be disputed, jurisdiction over the whole church of Christ. Their authority was not confined to any one particular place or district, but extended over the whole church, over all who professed subjection to their Master. And if so, then a Synod or Council of which they were constituent members might be fairly regarded as representing the church, and as thus entitled to exercise over the whole length and breadth of it whatever authority and jurisdiction was in itself right or competent. This is quite sufficient to sanction the use which the more judicious Presbyterians make of the Council at Jerusalem, as countenancing the general idea or principle of courts of review, or of a subordination of courts of ecclesiastical office-bearers—of some assemblies possessed of a wider representative character, and of a corresponding wider jurisdiction than others. It is of course only the general principle or idea that is sanctioned—the general principle or idea of the subordination of one court to another of wider jurisdiction—of the subordination of one church to many churches, or to their representatives. The way in which this general idea is to be followed out and applied may, or rather must, depend much upon external circumstances, upon opportunities of meeting and organizing; but enough may be fairly deduced from the inspired record of the Council at Jerusalem, if it was really intended to afford instructions in regard to church government in subsequent ages, to show that this general idea may be legitimately applied to the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs.

The regulation of all ecclesiastical affairs, and especially the decision of theological controversies, should be characterized at once by an uncompromising adherence to truth, and by a tender regard to the infirmities and prejudices of those who may be to some extent involved in error.

That both these qualities were exhibited in the decision pronounced by the apostles and elders upon this occasion, might be easily shown; but it is not necessary to enter into detail upon this point. That these qualities should be combined in the decisions and proceedings of ecclesiastical office-bearers in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, is a position the truth of which all admit; but experience abundantly proves that it is very difficult to follow it out in practice, and the history of the church exhibits very many instances in which the one or the other of these objects was entirely disregarded or trampled under foot. There have been many instances in which individuals possessed of authority or influence in the church and in ecclesiastical councils have, on the one hand, exhibited, under the profession of a great zeal for truth, a great want of Christian forbearance and discretion, and practised odious and offensive tyranny; or, on the other hand, under a profession of moderation and forbearance, have sacrificed the interests of truth and sound doctrine. The Council at Jerusalem did neither, but combined a due regard to both the important objects referred to; while the sharp contention that soon after separated Paul and Barnabas—originating, no doubt, in the same general features of character, in the same tendencies and infirmities which tempt men on more public questions either to undue zeal or to undue forbearance—affords a striking lesson of the necessity of men keeping at all times a strict watch over their own spirits, and realizing unceasingly their dependence upon the Spirit of all grace, that they may be guided in the ways of wisdom, and fitted for the right discharge of their duties, to the glory of God and the welfare of His church. Some Congregationalists have dwelt much upon the humility and condescension which the apostles manifested in the whole course they pursued upon this occasion, in submitting the decision of the matter to an assembly of elders in conjunction with themselves,—in permitting disputation to go on in their presence,—and in dealing with the erroneous views propounded by arguments, and not by mere authority. We have no doubt that the apostles manifested in their proceedings and deportment upon

this occasion, everything which humility and condescension could have suggested; but in the facts now referred to, in which Congregationalists see only manifestations of these graces, we see, as has been explained, the proof of something else, of something different from this, and much more specific; a proof, viz., that they did not act in this matter as inspired men under infallible guidance, but as ordinary office-bearers in conjunction with the elders; and we venture to think, that if they were really upon this occasion exercising their infallible apostolic authority, as Congregationalists allege, the facts referred to would furnish indications rather of something like simulation and deceit, than of humility and condescension.

It thus appears, upon a survey of this whole subject, that the first controversy which arose in the Christian church, and which broke out while the church enjoyed the guidance of inspired men, was taken up and disposed of in such a way as was fitted and intended to afford general lessons as to the mode in which the affairs of the church should be conducted, after the miraculous and supernatural gifts of the Spirit should be taken away.

Sec. VI.—*Obligation of Apostolic Practice.*

There can be no reasonable doubt that it may be justly laid down as a general principle, that apostolic practice, such as that exemplified in the Council at Jerusalem, does impose a permanent binding obligation in regard to the constitution and government of the church, and the administration of its affairs; though it has been generally conceded by Presbyterians, that there are some limitations or modifications attaching to this principle in its practical application. The truth of this general principle seems very clearly deducible from these two positions—First, that Christ commissioned and authorized the apostles to organize His church as a distinct visible society, and to make provision for preserving or perpetuating it to the end of the world; and secondly, that the apostles, in executing this branch of their commission, have left us few direct or formal precepts or instructions as to the constitution and government of the church, and have merely furnished us with some materials for ascertaining what it was that they themselves ordinarily *did* in establishing and organizing churches, or what was the actual state and condition of the church and the churches while under their

guidance. Whatever *precepts* or *directions* they might have given on this or on any other subject, would have been received as binding, and whatever precepts or directions they *have* given, are admitted to be so; but as they were executing their Master's commission when they were establishing and organizing churches, —as they did little in the way of executing this branch of their commission except by their practice in establishing and organizing churches, and by giving us materials for ascertaining what their *practice* in this respect *was*,—and as there is no intimation in Scripture, either in the way of general principle or of specific statement, that any change was ever after to take place in the constitution and government of the church, or that any authority was to exist warranted to introduce innovations, the conclusion from all these considerations, taken in combination, seems unavoidable, that the practice of the apostles, or what they actually did in establishing and organizing churches, is, and was intended to be, a binding rule to the church in all ages; that the Christian churches of subsequent times ought, *de jure*, to be fashioned after the model of the churches planted and superintended by the apostles.

It is proper, however, to advert to some of the limitations and modifications under which this general principle is to be held and applied, and to the objections commonly adduced against it. One very obvious limitation of it is, that the apostolic practice which is adduced as binding, must be itself established from the word of God, and must not rest merely upon materials derived from any other and inferior source. This position is virtually included in the great doctrine of the sufficiency and perfection of the written word,—a doctrine held by Protestants in opposition to the Church of Rome.

If this doctrine be true, then it follows that anything which is imposed upon the church as binding by God's authority, or *jure divino*, whether the medium, or proximate source, of obligation be apostolic practice or anything else, must be traced to, and established by, something contained in, or fairly deducible from, Scripture. Unless Scripture proof be adduced, we are entitled at once to set aside all claim alleged upon our submission. If God really fitted and intended the written word to be the only rule of faith and practice, and has made this known to us, He has thereby not only authorized, but required us to reject or disregard anything obtruded upon the church as binding that cannot be traced to that

source. Papists and Prelatists, as we shall afterwards have occasion to show, profess to produce to us evidence of apostolic practice, or of what the apostles did, not derived from Scripture, but from later authors; and on this ground demand our assent and submission to their views and arrangements, in regard to the constitution and government of the church.

We think it can be shown that neither of these parties has produced proof of apostolic practice favourable to their views, which can be regarded as sufficient, when tried fairly by the ordinary rules of historical evidence. But even if they could produce evidence of apostolic practice that answered this description, and was adequate to establish any ordinary point of history as a matter of fact, we would hold it sufficient to disprove any alleged *obligation* to submit to it, that it could not be deduced from anything contained in the written word. Subsequent ordinary historical evidence of apostolical practice might be legitimately employed in elucidating the meaning and confirming the sense of a scriptural statement which was somewhat obscure or dubious in its import, but could not of itself be sufficient to impose an authoritative obligation.

It is generally conceded, however, that everything which the apostles did or sanctioned, connected with the administration of the affairs of the church, is not necessarily and *ipso facto*, even when contained in or deduced from Scripture, binding universally and permanently upon the church. It has, for instance, been the opinion of the great body of divines of all sects and parties, that the decrees of the Council of Jerusalem, simply as such, and irrespective of anything else found in Scripture bearing upon any of the subjects to which they refer, were not intended to be of universal and permanent obligation, and are not now, in fact, binding upon Christians. It was undoubtedly made imperative upon the churches of that age by the decree of the Council, to abstain from things strangled, and from blood; but the great body of divines of all parties have been of opinion, that an obligation to abstain from these things was not thereby imposed permanently upon the church, and is not now binding upon Christians. If this principle may be warrantably applied to what was then by express injunction, in accordance with the mind of the Holy Ghost, imposed upon the church, it must be at least equally warrantable to hold it applicable to what merely prevailed in fact in the primitive churches under apostolic superintendence. And,

accordingly, there are things which, as we learn from Scripture, obtained in the apostolic churches, but which scarcely any church now considers itself under an obligation to preserve. There were some things which, from their nature, seem to have been local and temporary, suited only to the particular circumstances of the church in that age, and in the countries where the gospel was first preached; and these have been generally regarded as destitute of all permanent binding force.

When this concession is once made, that there are some things made known to us in Scripture about the apostolic churches which were local and temporary, and not binding permanently upon the church in future ages (and it is a concession which could not be reasonably withheld), some degree of doubt or uncertainty is of course introduced into the application of the general principle formerly established, as to the permanent binding force of apostolic practice in regard to the constitution and government of the church and the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs. But this doubt or uncertainty as to *some* of the applications of the principle affords no ground for the use which some have made of it in rejecting the principle altogether, and denying that apostolic practice, ordinarily and as a general rule, forms a binding law for the regulation of the affairs of the church. The general considerations already adverted to establish the truth of the general position as to the ordinary binding force of apostolic practice. These considerations cannot be directly answered and refuted, or shown to involve anything erroneous or absurd; and therefore, as nothing formidable can be adduced upon the other side, the general principle must be held as proved. And neither the ground we have to believe that the principle is to be held with some qualifications, nor the difficulties that may arise in particular cases, as to the practical application of the principle viewed in connection with these qualifications and limitations, warrant us in refusing to admit and maintain it, and to make a reasonable application of it.

It must be admitted, indeed, that some practical questions have been started upon the particular subject we are now considering which are not of very easy or certain solution. But they are all of such a kind as are manifestly, from their very nature, and from the general genius and spirit of the Christian economy, of no great intrinsic importance; and such as that the consciences of men who are conscious to themselves of a sincere and honest desire to do the

will of Christ, so far as they clearly see it, need not be greatly distressed about the precise adjustment of them. We cannot enter into much detail upon this subject, or give any exposition of the particular questions that have been controverted under this general head; but we think the substance of the truth upon this topic—the principal general rules by which we ought to be guided in the regulation of this matter—may be summed up in the following positions:—

First, That nothing ought to be admitted into the ordinary government and worship of the Christian church which has not the sanction or warrant of scriptural authority, or apostolic practice at least, if not precept; but with this exception or limitation, as stated in the first chapter of our Confession of Faith, 'that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.'

Secondly, That the scriptural proof of any arrangement or practice having existed in the apostolic churches ordinarily and *prima facie* imposes an obligation upon all churches to adopt it,—an obligation that is imperative and unlimited in regard to all those things which obviously enter into the substance of the government and worship of the church, and the mode in which they are administered.

Thirdly, That the *onus probandi* lies upon those who propose to *omit* anything which has the sanction of apostolic practice, and that they must produce a satisfactory reason for doing so, derived either from some general principle or specific statement of Scripture bearing upon the point, or from the nature of the case, as making it manifest that the particular point of practice under consideration was local and temporary.

There are two great practical questions involved in the right adjustment of this general topic of the binding force of apostolical practice, or of the permanent obligation of what we know from Scripture to have been actually done in the primitive churches under apostolic superintendence, viz.,—first, whether it be lawful for Christian churches now to omit any arrangement or observance which the apostles introduced into, or sanctioned in, the churches; and, secondly, whether it be lawful to introduce into the church

any arrangement or observance which they did not sanction or require. To maintain the affirmative on either of these questions, as a general rule, seems to amount to something like a negation of the place or standing which is plainly ascribed to the apostles in the New Testament, as supernaturally authorized and guided by Christ for the work of organizing and establishing His church in the world. If this function were really devolved by Christ upon the apostles, and if they were supernaturally qualified by Him for the execution of it, then there is no reason whatever to reject, but, on the contrary, every reason to admit, the conclusion, that what they *did* in this matter, either in introducing or in omitting, when ascertained from Scripture, forms a rule or standard which the church in all ages is imperatively bound to follow. To deny this is virtually to reduce the apostles, with reference to what was evidently one of the main parts of their special function, to the level of ordinary uninspired men, and to ascribe to the office-bearers of the church in subsequent times an equal right and an equal fitness to determine the arrangements of Christ's kingdom with that which the apostles possessed. The rejection of apostolic practice as a binding rule for the church in all ages is of course glossed over by its defenders under plausible pretences; but it really amounts, in substance and in effect, to a preference of their own wisdom to that of the apostles, *i.e.*, of the wisdom of man to that of God.

The chief pretences employed in this matter are the alleged impossibility of making arrangements and instituting observances that might be equally adapted for all ages and countries; the allegation that the apostles introduced somewhat different arrangements into the different churches which they planted,—an allegation of which no evidence can be produced; and the alleged propriety and expediency of leaving room for a judicious adaptation of things so insignificant as external arrangements and ceremonies to the suggestions of experience, and to the existing state of the development of the Christian life and the Christian consciousness, to use the favourite phraseology of our own day, of particular churches or classes of men.

There might have been some plausibility in the allegation of the impossibility of introducing at once arrangements and ceremonies that would be equally adapted to all ages and countries, if Christianity, as an outward system, had at all resembled in its

general features and objects the Mosaic economy—if it had been intended to be a system of minute prescription and observance. This manifestly was not intended. Accordingly there is very little, as compared with the Mosaic economy, of what is external that can be held to be fixed or determined for the Christian church in all ages, either by the precepts or by the practice of the apostles. Christianity is adapted for permanence and for catholicity by the very absence of any detailed standard or directory of external arrangements and observances; and when so little that is merely external can be held to have been prescribed and imposed, even when it is assumed that apostolic practice constitutes a permanent binding rule, the presumption is very strong that nothing which has been so sanctioned may be omitted in subsequent ages, unless there be pretty manifest indications, either in the nature of the case or in some scriptural statements, that it was intended to be but local or temporary. Accordingly, almost all churches have admitted, as a general principle, their obligation to have still what apostolic practice has sanctioned, and have not differed very materially as to the limitations and practical applications of this principle.

In making this statement, of course I do not refer to those questions which have been started and debated between different churches, as to whether or not particular arrangements *were* made by the apostles, and did obtain in the apostolic churches,—as, for instance, whether the apostolic church was under the government of Peter as Christ's vicar,—whether it was ruled by diocesan prelates,—whether presbyters or elders, who were not ordinary pastors, had a share in the administration of its affairs. In discussing these points, the question is not, whether apostolic practice is a binding rule,—for both parties in these controversies usually concede that it is,—but whether the practice of the apostles did, in point of fact, include and sanction these particular arrangements. We refer to cases with respect to which *it is admitted* that the apostolic practice did sanction them, and where, of course, the question that arises is, Did this admitted practice of the apostles render the observance of them imperatively binding upon the church in future ages? The chief points to which *this* question has been applied, are of no great importance in themselves, and have not occasioned any great diversity of opinion, or much controversial discussion among men of sense and discrimination. They are principally these: the washing of the feet of the dis-

ciples, practised, and in some sense enjoined, by our Lord,—abstinence from blood,—the order of deaconesses,—the kiss of charity, or what some of the more strenuous defenders of its permanent obligation have called the ordinance of salutation,—and the *αγαπαϊ*, or love-feasts, which seem to have usually succeeded the celebration of public worship. There is no great difficulty in showing, partly from the nature of the case, and the manifest relation of the practices to temporary or local circumstances, partly from the manner in which they are spoken of in Scripture, and partly from other statements in the New Testament, which bear upon the particular point, though not directly and immediately treating of it, that these things are *not* binding upon Christians and churches in all ages, and that men's consciences need not be disturbed by the omission or disregard of them. The churches of Christ in general, while holding that these practices are not permanently binding, although admitting that we have in the New Testament sufficient grounds to believe that they did in fact generally obtain in apostolic times, have, at the same time, usually held, as a general principle, the binding force of apostolic practice or example, and have professed to apply this general principle to the actual regulation of their own conduct.

There is one topic connected with this subject which has given rise to a good deal of discussion in our own day, and on which, for this reason, we may make a passing observation, especially as it occupies a sort of intermediate position between the two classes of cases formerly adverted to, in the one of which the fact of the apostolic practice is admitted on both sides, and in the other of which it is controverted. I refer to the attempt which has been made to show that apostolic precept and practice fix one exclusive mode of providing for the temporal maintenance of a gospel ministry, viz., by the voluntary contributions of those who enjoy the benefit of it. That apostolic precept and practice impose an imperative obligation upon those who are taught to provide for the maintenance of him who teaches, and of course give him a right to maintenance from them, and that this was the way in which ordinarily ministers were maintained in the apostolic church, is of course admitted; and so far the parties are agreed as to what *de facto* the general apostolic practice was, while they are also agreed in this, that, *de jure*, this obligation to give, and this right to receive maintenance, permanently attach to the two parties respectively.

But it is contended on the other side—and, we are persuaded, with complete success—that there is nothing either in the statements of Scripture, or in the practice of the apostles, which affords any ground for the position, that it is unlawful for ministers to derive their support from any other source than the contributions of those among whom they labour; and that a survey of all that Scripture teaches upon the subject, and especially of the diversified procedure adopted by the apostle Paul in regard to his own maintenance, affords positive grounds for holding that this position is not true.

We have dwelt, however, longer than we intended upon the less important department of the subject, viz., the lawfulness or unlawfulness of *omitting* what apostolic practice sanctions; and we must now briefly advert to the other and more important topic comprehended under this general subject, viz., the lawfulness or unlawfulness of *introducing* what apostolic practice has *not* sanctioned. The difference upon the former question is one merely of degree; for it is generally admitted, even by those who hold as a general rule the binding force of apostolic practice or example, that there are some things which have the sanction of apostolic practice which may be lawfully omitted as not permanently binding. But, on the latter question, the difference is one of kind or of principle, because we hold it as a great general truth, that it is unwarrantable and unlawful to introduce into the government and worship of the Christian church any arrangements and ordinances which have not been positively sanctioned by Christ or His apostles; and because, when this general truth is denied, there is no limitation that can be put to the introduction of the inventions of men into the government and worship of Christ's house. There is no valid argument, or even reasonable presumption, against the truth of this general position, *as we have above explained it;* and there is a great deal that cannot be answered to be adduced in support of it. There is no warrant in Scripture for the doctrine laid down in the twentieth Article of the Church of England, that 'the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies,' unless this power be restricted within the limits indicated in the quotation formerly given from the first chapter of our own Confession of Faith. If these limits are carefully observed, the principle we have laid down is safe, for scarcely any case has ever been started where there was any real difficulty in deciding,—and on this the question turns,—whether a particular ecclesiastical arrangement about the

government and worship of the church was really the introduction and establishment of a new and unauthorized thing into the church, or merely the regulation of the circumstances requiring to be regulated in the mode of doing things, which things Christ or His apostles have sanctioned.

Sec. VII.—*Divine Right of a Form of Church Government.*

Another question suggested by the history of the council of Jerusalem is, whether or not a particular form of church government is laid down in Scripture so as to be binding by God's authority, or, *jure divino*, upon the church in subsequent ages? This question has given rise to a good deal of discussion, though it has not unfrequently been discussed in such a way as to resolve very much into a dispute about words, in which men, whose views did not very materially differ from each other, might support the affirmative or the negative in the question, according to the precise sense in which its terms might be explained. It has been the most generally prevalent opinion in the Christian church, that a particular form of church government has been laid down in Scripture so as to be binding upon future ages, though there has, of course, been much difference of opinion as to what the particular form of church government is which has received the sanction of Scripture. Those who have disputed or denied this *general* position about the Scripture sanctioning a particular form of church government, have been most commonly men who had some particular purpose to serve, who were exposed to the temptation of being influenced in their views and practice by some other consideration than a pure love of truth,—as, for instance, a desire to leave room for the interference of the civil power in the government of the church, or to palliate their own submission to what the civil power may have sanctioned and established in this matter. And in defending the position, that no particular form of church government was laid down in Scripture, they have usually represented the opposite opinion in a manner which the statements of its supporters do not warrant, as if *they* meant to assert that the whole detailed particulars of a full directory for the government of the church were laid down in Scripture, and admitted of no change,—a position which is manifestly untenable.

Papists, Prelatists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, have,

in general, contended that their own system of church government is laid down in Scripture, and is binding upon the church in all ages; but they have also in general admitted, that it is only the leading features, or fundamental principles of their system, that are sanctioned by Scripture, without claiming direct scriptural authority for its details, and without denying that there are things of minor importance connected with the government of the church which the church herself may regulate from time to time, according as local or temporary circumstances may suggest or require. In this way it sometimes happens, that the more reasonable and judicious *affirmers* and *deniers* of the *jus divinum* of a particular form of church government, do not differ very materially from each other on the general question, while very considerable differences are to be found on both sides as to what particular form of church government it is that has the sanction of Scripture, or can make out the most plausible claims to support upon scriptural grounds. It is also to be noticed, that those who concur in maintaining that there is a form of church government laid down in Scripture, differ considerably among themselves as to the *extent* to which they claim a scriptural sanction for the *subordinate* features of their own scheme; and as to the view they take of the fulness and clearness of the scriptural evidence even of what they may think the Scripture sanctions. So that, in laying down the position usually maintained by the defenders of the binding scriptural authority of a particular form of church government, it must be stated in this way, that the fundamental principles or leading features of a particular form of government for the church of all ages are indicated in Scripture, and are indicated in such a way as to impose an obligation of conformity upon the church in all succeeding times. I have no doubt of the truth of this position, and think that it can be satisfactorily established.

I think it can be, and has often been, proved that the Presbyterian form of church government, *in its fundamental principles and leading features*, is sanctioned by Scripture and apostolic practice; or, to adopt the language of our ordination formula, "is founded upon the word of God, and agreeable thereto;" and that this can *not* be truly predicated of any other form of church government, such as Prelacy and Congregationalism. I am not called upon *at present* to establish this position, as I am merely proposing to illustrate the general topic of the way in which the

subject of the *jus divinum* of church government has been, and should be, discussed. I may remark, however, in general, that the mode in which this position is to be established is that of an induction of particulars,—*i.e.*, we proceed in the way of collating from Scripture certain rules in regard to the government of the church, which have the sanction of apostolic practice; we combine these together; we show that, when combined, they constitute what may be fairly called a scheme or system of church government; and that this scheme or system is just Presbyterianism in its fundamental principles and leading features, as it has been held by the great body of those who have been usually classed under this designation. It is no very difficult matter, I think, to prove from Scripture that the apostles, in establishing and organizing churches, committed the ordinary administration of divine ordinances, and the ordinary regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, not to the body of the ordinary members of the church, but to rulers or office-bearers; that these office-bearers, settled and constituted by the apostles in the churches which they founded, were of two classes, viz., presbyters,—called also bishops,—and deacons; that no other ordinary class of functionaries was introduced by them into the administration of the government of the church, and especially no class of ordinary functionaries of superior rank or authority to the ministers of the word—the pastors of congregations; that these presbyters or bishops were divided into two classes, one of whom both taught and ruled, and the other only ruled, but did not ordinarily exercise the function of public teaching; that while these presbyters alone administered the spiritual affairs of the church, they all, in conjunction with the deacons, managed its temporal or secular affairs; that, in some cases at least, several congregations were placed under one presbyterial government; and that some countenance is given to the general idea of a gradation of judicatories—the general principle of a subordination of courts.

This was the way in which we see from Scripture that the apostles organized and made provision for the government of the churches which they planted. These different rules and arrangements, if really scriptural, as we believe they are, manifestly constitute, when combined together, a full scheme or system of government—what may be justly and reasonably called a particular form of church government; and *that* form of church government is manifestly just Presbyterianism in all its essential

principles and leading features, as distinguished from Prelacy on the one hand, and from Congregationalism on the other. The Presbyterian form of church government, then, has the warrant and sanction of apostolic practice, *i.e.*, we can show from Scripture that the churches planted by the apostles were organized substantially in accordance with the arrangements of what is usually called the Presbyterian system; and we have shown that there is no good ground for denying, and that there is quite sufficient ground for maintaining, as a general principle, with the limitations or modifications then explained, that the practice of the apostles in establishing and organizing churches, as made known or indicated to us in Scripture, is, and was intended to be, a permanent binding rule for regulating the government of the church of Christ, and of all its branches or sections. From all this the conclusion manifestly follows, that a particular form of church government has been laid down in Scripture as permanently binding upon the church of Christ—that form being the Presbyterian one.

This is what is implied in the profession which the ministers of our church are called upon to make when they receive ordination, and which, as I have already mentioned, is expressed in these words, that "the Presbyterian government and discipline of this church are founded upon the word of God, and agreeable thereto." The language here employed is cautious and temperate, and is thus well suited to the circumstances of a solemn profession to be made by a numerous body of men, who might not all see their way to concur in stronger and more specific phraseology. Besides, it is to be observed that the profession respects not merely the fundamentals or essentials of Presbyterianism in the abstract, which alone can be reasonably maintained to have the clear and positive sanction of apostolic practice; but "the Presbyterian government and discipline of this church," including the detailed development of the essential principles of Presbyterianism as exhibited in the actual constitution and arrangements of our church, and of all this in the concrete, or taken complexly, nothing higher or stronger could with propriety be affirmed, than that it is founded upon the word of God, and agreeable thereto. Of the *fundamental* principles and *leading* features of the Presbyterian system of church government as above described, and as distinguished from Prelacy and from Congregationalism, I would not

hesitate to use stronger and more specific language than our ordination formula applies to the Presbyterian government and discipline of this church—viz., this, that *in its substance it is the form* in regard to which Christ has, with sufficient plainness, indicated in His word, by the practice of His inspired apostles in establishing and organizing churches, that it is His mind and will that *it*, to the exclusion of all others, in so far as they are inconsistent with it, should be the form of government adopted in His church, and in all its branches: in other words, that Presbyterianism, in its substance or fundamental principles, is binding *jure divino* as the form of government by which the church of Christ ought permanently and everywhere to be regulated.

Some, in opposing the principle of the permanent scriptural authority or *jus divinum* of any one particular form of church government, take the ground that we have no sufficient materials in Scripture for determining what the apostolic practice in establishing and organizing churches was. Others—and this is the view taken by Mosheim—that the apostolic practice, though substantially known and ascertained, does not constitute a rule permanently binding upon the church; while others, again—though this is virtually a modification of the first view—found much upon an allegation that the apostles did not establish the same form of government in *all* the churches which they planted. For this last allegation no evidence whatever can be produced, and unless it be restricted to matters of a comparatively insignificant kind, and of a manifestly local and temporary character, such as would not affect the real position in dispute, there is much that conclusively disproves it. The first of these views implies a large amount of distorting and perverting the word of God,—the exercise of a great deal of sinful ingenuity in involving it in obscurity and confusion; while the second, unless restricted, as we have explained, within such narrow limits as to make it incapable of affecting the proper question in dispute, is based, as we have shown, upon a general principle that is not only untenable, but dangerous, as infringing upon the sufficiency and perfection of the written word.

These are nothing more than mere hints upon a somewhat difficult and complicated subject;* but if pondered and followed

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* *Vide* Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 37.—EDRS.

out, they may help to form a judgment upon a topic of considerable practical interest and importance in the present day, and may contribute to guard against the loose and latitudinarian views that are generally prevalent concerning it.

In conclusion, I would simply advert to another pretence which is sometimes employed in our day by those whose views concerning the government of the church, and the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, cannot stand a scriptural investigation, and which is had recourse to for the purpose of evading the authority of Scripture, without needing to face the question of what it is that Scripture teaches and imposes upon the subject. It consists in the insinuation (for the notion is too absurd to be openly and explicitly asserted) of some such idea as this, that the obligation to be subject wholly to Christ, and to be guided exclusively by His written word in all things, attaches only to the invisible church, or to individual believers; and not, or at least not so fully, to the visible church and its separate branches.* To state this notion plainly and distinctly is to refute it, for nothing surely can be more obvious than that the obligation to be subject wholly to Christ's authority, and to be guided exclusively by His word in all matters on which it furnishes any information, attaches equally to all societies as to all individuals, which profess to receive Him as their Master; that the general principles, in this respect, which apply to the invisible must apply equally to the visible church; and that the general principles and rules applicable to the catholic visible church in its totality, must apply equally to every particular church, *i.e.*, to every section or branch of the catholic visible church, to every distinct organized society, large or small, Prelatic, Presbyterian, or Congregational, which assumes to itself the character and designation of a church of Christ.

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* *Vide* Elliott, author of Horæ Apocalypticæ, in his reply to Dr Candlish.

CHAPTER III.

THE APOSTLES' CREED.

I ASSUME it as settled and proved, that the books which compose the New Testament were all given by inspiration of God; that the other works which have been ascribed to the apostles, whether assuming the form of gospels, or epistles, or liturgies—for we have some under all these heads—are to be regarded neither as genuine nor authoritative; and that the books of the New Testament, along with those of the Old Testament, as commonly held canonical by Protestants, form the only authoritative standard of faith and practice. All the different productions here referred to, though claiming to emanate from the apostles of our Lord, are destitute of any adequate external historical evidence, and their spuriousness can be fully established by conclusive internal evidence derived from their contents. There is, however, one production, in favour of which a claim has been set up to an apostolic origin, and of the genuineness of which it has been generally admitted that there is no specific internal proof. I refer to what is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, *Symbolum Apostolicum*.* It is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, though some of the most candid and judicious Romanists have been

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* Books and references on the Apostles' Creed:—

Catech. Trident, P. i., c. i.

Natalis Alexandri Hist. Eccles., Saec. i., Diss. xii.

Usserius, de Romanae Ecclesiae Symbolo.

Vossius, de tribus symbolis. Op., tom. vi.

Fabricius, Codex Apocryphus N. T., P. iii., tom. ii., pp. 339–364, where a list is given of authors who have written upon the Creed.

Heideggerus, Dissertationes Selectae, tom. ii., Diss. xv. and xvi.

Voetius, Disputationes Selectae, tom. i., Disp. v., p. 64.

Ittigius, Hist. Eccles., Saec. i., c. iii., sec. i., pp. 76–120.

Ittigius, de Pseudepigraphis Christi, Mariae et Apostolorum (subjoined to Disputatio de Haeresiarchis), c. viii., p. 144.

Carpzovius, Isagoge in Libros Eccles. Lutheran. Symbolicos, Pars. i., sec. i.

Walchii Introductio in Lib. Eccl. Luth. Symb., Lib. i., c. ii.

King's History of the Apostles'

unable to assent to it,* that this creed was composed by the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and that, of course, it is to be regarded as possessed of the same direct divine authority as the canonical Scriptures; and Protestants in general, though they have commonly denied that it was composed by the apostles, or is possessed in itself of any proper authority, have admitted that it contains sound apostolic doctrine, which is in accordance with, and can be established by, the word of God. The Lutheran and Anglican churches have adopted it along with the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, as a part of their authorized symbolical profession of faith. The Westminster divines subjoined it, along with the ten commandments and the Lord's prayer, to their catechisms, accompanied with this explanatory statement: "It is here annexed, not as though it were composed by the apostles, or ought to be esteemed canonical Scripture, as the ten commandments and Lord's prayer, but because it is a brief sum of the Christian faith, agreeable to the word of God, and anciently received in the churches of Christ."

It is not, however, possessed of any great antiquity, for it was not generally received in its present form till the very end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century, since which time it has been adopted as the creed of the Roman or Western Church, and is often spoken of by old writers under the name of *Symbolum Romanum*, though it has never been received by the Oriental or Greek churches. Among other notions borrowed from the Church of Rome, this of the apostolic origin and authority of the creed has been embraced and advocated by the Tractarians. Dr Newman, long before he joined the Church of Rome, described it as "the formal symbol which the apostles adopted and bequeathed to the church," and asserted that "it has an evidence of its apostolical origin, the same in kind with that for the Scriptures."†

Mosheim says that "all who have the least knowledge of antiquity look upon this opinion as entirely false, and destitute of all foundation." The reasons which led Dr Newman and other

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Creed, with critical observations on the different articles.

Bingham's Origines Ecclesiasticae, B. x., c. iii., vol. 3, p. 318.

Goode's Divine Rule of Faith and Practice, c. iv.; Peck's Rule of Faith, p. 206.

The chief doctrinal expositions of the Creed are those of Pearson, Barrow, Witsius, and Nicole.

* Cat. Trid., P. i., c. i., sec. 3.

† Goode's Rule of Faith, vol. 1, pp. 109, 110; new edition of 1853, p. 107.

Tractarians, who certainly had some knowledge of antiquity, to assert that the Creed was composed by the apostles, were probably these. They had been much in the habit, under the influence of a strong Popish leaning, of copying statements without much examination, notwithstanding all their pretensions to learning, from unscrupulous Popish controversialists. It is impossible, I think, for any man to doubt this, who has read Goode's very learned and valuable work, entitled, "The Divine Rule of Faith and Practice." With the views which these men held, in common with the Church of Rome, on the subject of tradition and the rule of faith, it was important to break down, as it were, the monopoly of infallibility which Protestants assign to the Scriptures, by bringing forward *one* other document not contained in Scripture, but handed down by tradition, which yet possessed apostolic authority. There is thus a great principle—that, viz., of the completeness or perfection of the sacred Scriptures—involved in the claim put forth on behalf of the Creed to an apostolic origin. And I have no doubt that another motive which induced them to support this notion was this, that, being determined enemies to the doctrines of grace—the great doctrines of the Reformation—they were glad to have a pretence for representing, as an inspired summary of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, a document in which these great truths were not explicitly asserted. Some of the early Protestant writers, such as the Magdeburg Centuriators, were disposed to concede the apostolic origin of the Creed, influenced apparently by the desire of being able to maintain, in opposition to the Romish charge against them of departing from the apostolic faith, that they held the whole doctrines which the apostles embodied in their summary of faith. Even Calvin* talks as if he had no great objection to concede to it an apostolic origin, and were rather disposed to favour the notion. It is nothing more than ascribing to Calvin (who may be fairly regarded as being, all things considered, the greatest and most useful gift that God has given to the church since the apostolic age) a participation in the common infirmities of humanity, if we suppose that he may have been unconsciously disposed to think more favourably of the apostolic origin of the Creed than the historical evidence warrants, because it seems to contain a more explicit

* Instit., L. ii., c. xvi., sec. 18.

assertion than the word of God does, of a doctrine which he held, and to which he appears to have attached some importance, viz., that Christ descended into hell,—in this sense, that after death He went to the place of the damned, and shared somehow in their torments. Calvin says that the ancients, with one accord, ascribed it to the apostles, and Newman says that the evidence of its apostolic origin is the same in kind as that for the Scriptures. Let us briefly state how this stands as a matter of fact.

We have no notice of the Creed *in its present form* till about the end of the fourth century, and we have no evidence antecedent to that period of its being asserted, or generally believed, that the apostles drew up and committed to writing *any* formal creed or summary of faith. A notion of this sort, originating in the end of the fourth century,—not existing previously, and not based upon anything like evidence previously recognised,—is entitled to no weight whatever in proof of a matter of fact of the kind in question. The precise facts are these. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, in a letter written about the year 380, speaks of the Creed of the Apostles, which the Roman Church always preserves uncorrupted. But he does not expressly assign to it, as a document, an apostolic origin, and he might call it the Apostles' Creed merely to indicate that it contained a summary of the doctrine which the apostles taught. Ruffinus, in his Exposition upon the Creed, published about fifteen years later, near the very end of the century, is the first who expressly ascribes it to the apostles; and his statement embodies some circumstances which throw much doubt upon his leading position. He describes it as a tradition of their forefathers, *tradunt majores nostri;* which may perhaps be regarded as an admission that this had not previously been asserted in writing in any of those ancient works which are now lost, any more than in those which have been preserved. He tells us that the apostles, before dispersing to preach the gospel over the world, resolved to prepare a common summary of the Christian faith, in order to guard against any diversity in their future teaching,—"ne forte alii ab aliis abducti diversum aliquid his qui ad fidem Christi invitabantur, exponerent;"—and accordingly they met together, and, under the guidance of the Spirit, they prepared this Creed in this way, by each contributing a portion as he thought best,—"conferendo in unum quod sentiebat unusquisque." This is certainly a very improbable story, both as it respects the motive and the pro-

cess of the composition. His statement as to the mode of composing it was very soon improved and adorned in a sermon, falsely ascribed to Augustine, and published in the fifth century, which informs us that each of the twelve apostles, when assembled to compose the Creed, uttered in succession one of the clauses of which it consists: Peter saying, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty Maker of heaven and earth;" Andrew, "and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord;" James, "who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," etc. Pope Leo the Great, who flourished in the middle of the fifth century, repeats the substance of this story, ascribing a clause to each of the twelve apostles, but without specifying the individual authors of each. From this time, the apostolic origin of the Creed, in the sense of the document having been prepared in its present form by the apostles, was generally held as an article of faith in the Western churches, though so late as the Council of Florence, about the middle of the fifteenth century, the Greeks maintained that this Creed was, and had always been, unknown in the churches of the East.*

This is really the whole evidence from antiquity in support of the apostolic origin of the Creed, in its present form, as a document; and, even if we were to concede to Dr Newman that the evidence is the same in kind as for the Scriptures, still it is manifest that the difference in *degree* is so great, that we may confidently maintain, that in the one case it amounts to a conclusive proof, and in the other it does not reach even to a presumption. Some of the fathers, though none more ancient than the time of Ambrose and Ruffinus, have told us that the apostles used a creed which was not committed to writing, but handed down by memory and tradition. But this, even if true, is not relevant to the point under consideration; unless, indeed, it could be proved that the creed which they used and transmitted was precisely identical, not only in substance, but in words, with that which we now have.

Some of the earlier fathers speak frequently of a canon or rule of faith, evidently meaning by this, a brief, comprehensive summary of the leading doctrines of Christianity. But they did

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* Ittigius, Dissertatio de Pseudepigraphis Christi, Virginis Mariæ et Apostolorum, p. 146, subjoined to his Dissertatio de Hæresiarchis ævi Apostolici et Apostolico proximi.

Fabricii Codex Apoc. N. T., P. iii., p. 349.

Natalis Alexander, de Symbolo.

not, in using this language, refer to the present Creed,—for some of them, in using it, and even in applying to the summary the word symbolum, refer explicitly to the general confession of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in the administration of baptism, as prescribed by our Saviour, and recorded in Scripture; and the rest, when they speak of the creed, the canon, the rule of faith, give us a creed of their own, agreeing, indeed, in substance with the present Creed, but not by any means identical with it. This latter statement applies more particularly to Irenæus and Tertullian in the second century, who have given us each two different summaries of the faith generally received in the Christian church; and to Origen and Gregory Thaumaturgus, in the third, who have given us each one such creed or summary;—all these agreeing in substance with each other, and with the present Creed, but all so far differing from it, as to prove that it was not during the first three centuries known in the church as an apostolic document, and that no one brief summary of the Christian faith, supposed to possess apostolic authority, was then generally known and adopted. The entire absence of all reference to the Apostles' Creed in the proceedings and discussions connected with the Nicene Council, and the formation of the Nicene Creed, affords conclusive proof that the church in general, even in the early part of the fourth century, knew *nothing of any creed* that was generally regarded as having an apostolic origin and authority. And this is confirmed by the fact that, whereas the Nicene Creed, like the creeds or summaries of faith which we find in Irenæus, Tertullian, and Origen, was but an amplification of the confession of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, with a much more precise and specific condemnation of Arianism than we find in any previous creed or summary; it was not till the Council of Constantinople in 381, when our present Creed was becoming better known through the growing ascendency of the Church of Rome, that there were added to the Nicene Creed, along with a much fuller profession concerning the divinity of the Holy Ghost, in opposition to the heresy of Macedonius, the other articles not so immediately connected with the confession of the Trinity, which still form the conclusion of the Creed.*

* The Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon make no mention of the Apostles' Creed, and virtually repudiate any other than the Nicene. What we commonly call the Nicene Creed is really the Constantinopolitan.

The diversities which we find subsisting among the ancient creeds or summaries,—and which are very considerable as to their fulness, or the number of the different articles they contain, and as to the words in which they are expressed, though they all agree as to their substance so far as they go,—furnish satisfactory evidence that there was not during the first four centuries any creed, written or oral, which was generally regarded as the production of the apostles. And what is specially important and altogether conclusive, in showing that the present Creed has no claim to an apostolic origin in any other sense than this, that it contains, as all admit, a summary of the doctrine which the apostles taught, is the express testimony of Ruffinus, that the two articles, of the descent of Christ into hell, and the communion of saints, were not to be found in the creed of the Roman Church, or of any of the Eastern churches even at the end of the fourth century; while the creed of some other churches which contained these articles, wanted others which were found in the creeds of the Roman and Oriental churches.

In opposition to all this body of evidence, Romanists have really nothing to say that is possessed even of plausibility. They can say nothing but this,—that there was no material variation among the early creeds in point of substance. But this is not to the point. No one doubts that all those creeds which have been referred to, including the different versions of the present Creed, exhibit correctly, so far as they go, the substance of the doctrine which the apostles taught, and which is accordant with the Scripture. The only question is,—Was the present Creed,—as a document of course, as to the words of which it is composed,—or any other creed or summary of Christian doctrine, the production of the inspired apostles? and the evidence which has been referred to, *requires* us to answer this question in the negative. Yet the Church of Rome has defined in the Trent Catechism, that the apostles not only composed the Creed, but gave it the name of symbolum; and she exacts the belief of this of her subjects.

Laurentius Valla, a learned and candid writer who flourished before the Reformation in the end of the fifteenth century, maintained that the Creed was not the production of the apostles, and was not composed till the time of the Council of Nice; but the Inquisition compelled him to retract this heresy, and to profess that he believed what holy mother church believed upon

this point.* Erasmus, in his preface to his Annotations upon Matthew's Gospel, made the following very cautious statement: "Symbolum an ab Apostolis proditum sit, nescio." The Faculty of Theology at Paris censured this *nescientia*, as they called it, as fitted to promote impiety; and Erasmus, in a declaration which he published in consequence of the censure, has fully explained the grounds of his hesitation, though professing his willingness to believe in its apostolic origin, if the church required it.†

Dupin, one of the most fair and candid of the Romanist writers, held that there was no proof of the apostolic origin of the Creed, and that, on the contrary, the historical evidence was against it. But he was obliged by the Archbishop of Paris to make a sort of retraction of this opinion; although, after all, it was only in the following form: "I acknowledge that we ought to regard the Creed of the apostles as a formula of faith prepared by them in substance, though some terms in it were not the same in all churches."‡

Attempts have been made to show that the canonical Scriptures countenance the idea that the apostles prepared and communicated to the churches a brief summary of Christian doctrine; nay, it has even been asserted that there are references in Scripture to that very document which we now call the Apostles' Creed. This notion is indeed repudiated by the more judicious and candid of the Roman Catholic writers,§ but it has found favour among the Anglican Tractarians, and Dr Newman went so far as to say that the apostle Paul quotes from the Creed,‖ and refers in proof of this to 1 Cor. xv. 3: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." The quotation of course is, "Christ died for our sins." Dr Newman is of opinion that the source from which Paul derived this doctrine was the Creed. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that Paul has repeatedly and explicitly declared that he received his doctrine from a different and a higher source, even from the Lord, and by the revelation of Jesus Christ. We have plain enough intimations in Scripture,

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* Ittigius, Hist. Eccl. Sæc. i., pp. 79, 80.

† Fabricius, Codex. Apoc. N. T., P. iii., p. 353.

‡ Pfaff. Histor. Theol. Liter., Pars iii., p. 280.

§ Nicole sur le Symbole, pp. 6, 7.

‖ Goode's Rule of Faith. New edition, vol. i., p. 109.

that, before men were admitted by baptism into the communion of the visible church, they were not only instructed in the leading principles of Christianity, but were called upon to make a profession of their faith in Christ, and to answer some questions which were proposed to them. It was quite natural that the profession of faith which converts were expected and required to make before and at baptism, should be connected with, and based upon, a confession of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whose name baptism was administered; and accordingly, as we formerly remarked, many of the fathers speak of the creed or rule of faith as comprised in the apostolic commission to baptize in the name of the three persons of the Godhead; and, moreover, we find that *all* the earlier creeds were just amplifications or explanations of these heads,—fuller statements of what the Scriptures teach concerning these three persons. This profession, though everywhere the same in substance, varied considerably at different periods and in different churches, just because there was no one form which was recognised as possessed of apostolical authority; and there was no church which, during the first three centuries, attempted to exercise, or was recognised as entitled to exercise, authority to impose a form upon the other churches of Christ.

We have no adequate materials for tracing the growth or enlargement of any of these early creeds, and the different changes they underwent; but we have good ground to believe generally, that explanations and additional declarations were from time to time introduced into them, guarding against the different errors and heresies that might have been broached, and importing upon the part of those who received them a renunciation of these errors and heresies; and this is just the principle which is to be applied in unfolding and explaining the history of *all* creeds and confessions down till the present day. This general statement applies no doubt to the Apostles' Creed, which was just the creed commonly used in the Roman Church. We do not know precisely the history of all the changes which have been made upon it; but we do know the important fact, that the articles on Christ's descent to hell and the communion of saints, formed no part of it till the end of the fourth, or the beginning of the fifth century; and we have no positive evidence that the article on Christ's descent to hell had previously existed in the creed of any church except that of Aquileia. Attempts have been made to trace the additions which, since

the apostles' age, have been made to the Creed, by reference to the errors against which they were intended to guard. But this is not a subject of much practical importance, as the errors and heresies referred to have long ceased to meet with any support; and as it can scarcely be said that the Creed, even supposing it were possessed of authority, does give anything like an explicit decision upon any topics of importance which now divide the professing churches of Christ.

Protestants usually profess their adherence to all the articles of the Apostles' Creed, as well as Papists; and neither party can deduce any argument against the other from anything actually contained in it. It is indeed true, that when Protestants used to defend themselves against the charge adduced by the Romanists, that they had departed from the apostolic faith, by alleging that they held all the doctrines of the apostolic Creed, some Papists met this allegation with a denial, and asserted that Protestants did not believe in the holy catholic church. But this, of course, they could make out only by attaching their own arbitrary and unwarranted sense,—first, to the holy catholic church as a subsisting thing; and secondly, to what is implied in a profession of belief in it. The Papists would fain have it assumed that the holy catholic church in the Creed, means a widely extended visible society, united in outward communion under the same government, and with one visible head. Protestants maintain that this is not the correct idea of the catholic church, as presented to us either in Scripture or in primitive antiquity; and of course object to the warrantableness of putting such an interpretation upon it in the Creed. Papists further contend that a profession of believing in the holy catholic church implies a conviction, not only that Christ has a church on earth, but also that all men are bound to believe the church in all things pertaining to faith. This is explicitly laid down in the ordinary Popish catechisms in common use in this country; and it was taught also by Dr Newman even before he made an avowal of Popery.* Protestants, however, repudiate this interpretation, and can easily prove that the words do not properly mean, and were not in the early church understood to mean, anything more than a belief in the existence of the catholic church as a society in some respects *one*.

* Goode's Rule of Faith, vol. i., p. 55.

If men appeal to the Creed as a proof of their orthodoxy, they are of course bound to explain its meaning, and to show that they hold its statements in a reasonable and honest sense. But except upon the ground of such an appeal made by ourselves, and thereby committing us, we are under no obligation to give *any* interpretation to the statements of the Creed,—to prove that they have any meaning, or to establish what that meaning is,—just because the Creed, not being possessed of any proper intrinsic authority, the truth and accuracy of all its statements must, like those of every other uninspired, and consequently unauthoritative document, be judged of by another standard. It may be an interesting inquiry to ascertain in what sense the articles of the Creed were generally understood at the time when, so far as we can learn, they were first introduced, and at subsequent periods. But the inquiry is a purely historical one, and the result, whatever it may be, can lay us under no obligation as to our own faith. An essay was once written by a Lutheran divine,* in which he exhibited in parallel columns the Lutheran, the Calvinistic, and the Popish interpretations of all the different articles in the Creed. And it certainly could not be proved that any one of them was inconsistent with the sense which the words bear, or in which they might be reasonably understood. Another writer afterwards added a fourth column, containing the Arminian or Pelagian interpretation of all the articles, and neither could this be successfully redargued, without having recourse to a standard at once more authoritative and more explicit.

Nay, it is well known that Arians, who deny the divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost, have no hesitation in expressing their concurrence in the Creed, and even appeal to the common use of it in early times, as showing that a profession of belief in the divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost, was not required in the primitive church. The conclusion which they draw is unfounded. It can be satisfactorily proved that the doctrine of the Trinity was generally held in the primitive church from the age of the apostles, although it is also certain that, before the Arians and other heretics openly opposed it, some Christian writers did not speak with so much precision and accuracy on these points as were used by subsequent authors; and that on the same ground

* Ittigius, Hist. Eccles. Sæc. i., p. 78.

it was not so prominently and explicitly set forth in the public profession of the church. It is also true that the Apostles' Creed, and indeed all the ancient creeds, are plainly constructed upon a plan which insinuates, or rather countenances, the doctrine of the Trinity, as they are all based upon the apostolic commission embodying a requirement to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Still it cannot be said that the Apostles' Creed excludes the Arian view with anything like explicitness; and it is certain that we have creeds composed by Arians in the fourth century, which do speak of the dignity of our Lord and Saviour, so far as the mere words employed are concerned, in a far higher strain than the Apostles' Creed does.

These considerations are quite sufficient of themselves to prove that the Apostles' Creed, as it is called, is not entitled to much respect, and is not fitted to be of much use, as a summary of the leading doctrines of Christianity. A document which may be honestly assented to by Papists and Arians, by the adherents of the great apostasy and by the opposers of the divinity of our Saviour, can be of no real utility as a directory, or as an element or bond of union among the churches of Christ. And while it is so brief and general as to be no adequate protest or protection against error, it does not contain any statement of some important truths essential to a right comprehension of the scheme of Christian doctrine and the way of salvation. It is quite true that, under the different articles of the Creed, or even under any of the earlier creeds which contained merely a brief profession of faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we might bring in, as many authors have done, an explanation of all the leading doctrines taught us in Scripture; but it is not the less true that they are not stated in the document itself, and that there is nothing in its words which is fitted to bring them to our notice.

Neither can it be said that all that is contained in the Creed is of primary importance; and it is rather gratifying to know that the articles of Christ's descent into hell, and of the communion of saints—certainly the least important which it contains—were not inserted at least till the end of the fourth century. The first of these articles—viz., the statement that Christ descended into hell—has given rise to a good deal of discussion. In adverting to it, it must be remembered that, in so far as the statement that Christ descended into hell is merely to be found in the Creed, we are

under no obligation to explain or to believe it. But the important question is, Does Scripture sanction the statement; and if so, in what sense? Now there is no reasonable doubt that the statement *in terminis* is sanctioned by Scripture. The declaration of Peter* seems to imply, that immediately antecedent to His resurrection, the ψυχή of Christ was in Hades, the word often translated by hell in our version; and the statement of Paul,† referring apparently to the same period of Christ's history, seems to warrant us in applying to His condition at that time the idea of a descent, so that the statement applied to Christ in the Creed—*κατελθόντα εἰς ᾅδην*—"descendit ad inferos"—is *in terminis* supported by Scripture, and may therefore be warrantably adopted. It does not by any means follow, however, that it is either so clear in its sense as thus put, or so important in its application, as to be entitled to occupy a place in a public profession of faith, whether more compendious or more enlarged; and yet the Church of England has injudiciously made it the sole subject of one of her thirty-nine articles. But the only important question is,—What is the real meaning of *those portions of Scripture* which seem to warrant the statement that Christ descended into Hades?

Calvin's view has been already stated, but it is entirely unsupported by any scriptural evidence, and it seems to be plainly enough contradicted by our Saviour's declaration to the penitent thief upon the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Many are of opinion that the scriptural statements mean merely that He was really and truly dead in the same sense in which other men die, by the actual separation of the soul from the body, and that He really continued under the power of death for a time. And the Westminster divines give this explanation of the article in the Creed about His descent into Hades, that "He continued in the state of the dead, and under the power of death, till the third day." There is good scriptural ground for maintaining that Hades sometimes means merely the grave or the state of death, without including any more precise or specific idea: it is manifest that the scope of the passage in the second of Acts—and the same may be said of the passage in Ephesians—does not require us to attach any other meaning to it; and, therefore, so far as these two passages are concerned—and they constitute, as we have seen, the

* Acts ii. 27. † Eph. iv. 8, 9.

scriptural foundation of the position—nothing more than this can be proved. But the question still remains,—naturally suggested by this subject, though not necessary to the exposition of it,—Do we know nothing more of the condition of Christ's soul during the period of its separation from His body? The only thing in Scripture that can be fairly regarded as conveying to us any certain information upon this point, is His own declaration to the thief upon the cross, that he would that day be with Him in paradise, which may be considered to imply that His soul did go to Hades, or the state of the departed, taken as descriptive of, or including the place and condition of the souls of the righteous in happiness, waiting for the redemption of their bodies. The Church of Rome teaches—and in this she has the sanction of some of the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and even of Augustine, by far the greatest of them all—that Christ's descent into hell means that He went to the *limbus patrum*, a place somewhere in the neighbourhood of hell, in the more common sense of that word, where all the righteous men that died before His incarnation, from Adam downwards, had hitherto been kept,—took them thence with Him, and carried them to heaven. But all this is a presumptuous fable, having no warrant in the word of God. We have, indeed, no definite information as to anything Christ did, or as to the way in which He was engaged between His death and His resurrection, except His own declaration upon the cross, that He would that day be in paradise; for, with respect to the very obscure and difficult passage in 1 Pet. iii. 19, about His going and preaching to the spirits in prison, I must say that I have never met with an interpretation of it that seemed to me altogether satisfactory. Among the many interpretations that have been given of it, there are just two in support of which anything really plausible, as it appears to me, can be advanced—viz., first, that which regards the preaching there spoken of as having taken place in the time of Noah, and through the instrumentality of Noah; and secondly, that which regards it as having taken place after His resurrection, and through the instrumentality of the apostles. The latter view is ably advocated in Dr John Brown's Expository Discourses on First Peter. If *either* of these interpretations be the true one, the passage has no reference to the period of His history between His death and His resurrection.

I think it is much to be regretted that so very inadequate and

defective a summary of the leading principles of Christianity as the Apostles' Creed,—possessed of no authority, and having no extrinsic claims to respect,—should have been exalted to such a place of prominence and influence in the worship and services of the church of Christ; and I have no doubt that this has operated injuriously in leading to the disregard of some important articles of Christian doctrine, which are not embodied in it, but which are of fundamental importance. Even in the third century, we find the doctrines of grace,—the true principles of the Gospel which unfold the scriptural method of salvation,—were thrown into the background, were little attended to, and not very distinctly understood; while the attention of the church in the fourth century was almost entirely engrossed by controversial speculations about the Trinity and the person of Christ; and it is, I believe, in some measure from the same cause—*i.e.*, having the Apostles' Creed pressed upon men's attention in the ordinary public services of the church, as a summary of Christian doctrine, entitled to great deference and respect—that we are to account for the ignorance and indifference respecting the great principles of evangelical truth by which so large a proportion of the ordinary attenders upon the services of the Church of England have been usually characterized,—a result aided, no doubt, by the peculiar character and complexion of the other two creeds which are also sanctioned by her articles, and which are sometimes, though not so frequently, used in her public service—the Nicene and the Athanasian.

CHAPTER IV.

THE APOSTOLICAL FATHERS.

ALTHOUGH I do not intend to dwell at any length upon individuals, however eminent, or upon mere literary history, I think it right to advert to the apostolical fathers, as they are called, and their works, genuine or spurious. Under this designation are comprehended those men to whom any writings now in existence are ascribed, who lived before the apostles were removed from the world, *i.e.*, before the end of the first century,—the date when there is good reason to believe that John, the last of the apostles, died. The period of which we have an inspired history in the book of the Acts, extends to about thirty years, from the death of our Saviour till about the year A.D. 64. There is no reason to doubt, though Mosheim speaks doubtfully of it, that Paul suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Nero, in the year A.D. 67 or 68; and there is some ground to believe, though the historical evidence of this is not so full and strong, that Peter too then entered into his rest. There are none of the canonical books of the New Testament which were written after this period, except the Epistles and the Apocalypse of John, composed about the end of the century. And these writings of John convey to us little information of a historical kind, with respect to the condition of the church, beyond this, that errors in doctrine and corruptions in practice had crept in, and infested the churches to a considerable extent. It has been often remarked, that there is no period in the history of the Christian church, in regard to which we have so little information, as that of above thirty years, reaching from the death of Peter and Paul to that of John. There is no good reason to believe that any of the writings of the apostolic fathers now extant, were published during that interval. Those of them that are genuine, do not convey to us much information concerning the condition of the church, and add but little to our knowledge upon any subject;

and what may be gleaned from later writers concerning this period, is very defective, and not much to be depended upon. It is enough that God has given us in His word everything necessary for the formation of our opinions, and the regulation of our conduct; and we cannot doubt that He has in mercy and wisdom withheld from us what there is too much reason to think would have been greatly abused. As matters stand, we have these two important points established: First, that we have no certain information,—nothing on which, as a mere question of evidence, we can place any firm reliance,—as to what the inspired apostles taught and ordained, but what is contained in, or deduced from, the canonical Scriptures; and secondly, that there are no men, except the authors of the books of Scripture, to whom there is anything like a plausible pretence for calling upon us to look up as guides or oracles. The truth of these positions will appear abundantly manifest from a brief survey of the apostolical fathers and their writings; and in conducting this survey, I shall aim chiefly at collecting such materials as may be best fitted to establish and illustrate them, as they are indeed the only really important lessons bearing upon theological inquiries, which an examination of the writings of the apostolical fathers is fitted to suggest.

There are five persons usually comprehended under this name, *i.e.*, there are five men who undoubtedly lived during the age of the apostles, and did converse, or might have conversed, with them, to whom writings still in existence have been ascribed, viz., Barnabas, Hermas, Clemens, Polycarp, and Ignatius.

Sec. I.—*Barnabas.*

Barnabas was the companion of Paul during a considerable portion of his labours; is frequently mentioned in the book of the Acts; and has even the title of an apostle applied to him. An epistle exists,* partly in Greek and partly in a Latin translation, which, though it does not contain *in gremio* any formal indication of its author, has been long known under the title of the Catholic Epistle of Barnabas; and it is expressly ascribed by Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, early in the third century, to the Barnabas of the Acts. The epistle gives no information, doctrinal,

* Rennell's Proofs of Inspiration, c. iv., pp. 92–104.

practical, or historical, of the slightest value; and contains so much that is manifestly senseless and childish, especially in allegorizing the facts of Old Testament history, and the rites of the Jewish church, that it is strange that it should ever have been regarded as the production of Barnabas. Its genuineness was at one time strenuously defended by the most eminent writers of the Church of England, such as Hammond, Bull, and Pearson. Its spuriousness was elaborately and conclusively established by Jones, in the second volume of his work on the Canon. Its genuineness is now almost universally given up, even by Episcopalians,* and is scarcely maintained, so far as I am aware, by any except some German rationalists, who have a very low standard of what was to be expected in point of sense and accuracy even from apostles; and who would fain persuade men that there are just as unwarrantable and extravagant misapplications of the Old Testament in the epistles ascribed to Paul, and especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as in that ascribed to Barnabas. The testimonies, however, of Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, prove that this epistle must have existed about the middle of the second century, and perhaps earlier; and it thus, especially when viewed in connection with the commendation which these eminent men bestowed upon it, affords a proof of the little reliance that is to be placed upon the authority of the fathers in the interpretation of Scripture. (It is proper to mention, that the epistle ascribed to Barnabas does not contain indications of any material deviations from the system of doctrine taught in the sacred Scriptures, and that pretty explicit testimonies have been produced from it in support of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ.†)

Sec. II.—*Hermas.*

Most of what has now been said about the Epistle of Barnabas applies also in substance to the work which has been called the Shepherd of Hermas. It is utterly unworthy of being ascribed, as it has often been, to the Hermas who is mentioned in Paul's epistles, or to any man who was a companion of the apostles, although, from the references made to it, not only by Clemens

* Burton and Conybeare. *Vide* Conybeare's Bampton Lectures, 1839, pp. 72, 73.

† Bull and Horsley.

Alexandrinus, and Origen, but also by Irenæus, who lived before them, it must have been written before the middle of the second century, and, what is rather strange, was sometimes read in the churches. It contains nothing of any value, either historically or theologically, except that one or two extracts have been produced from it in support of the divinity of our Saviour. There is one passage in it which has been adduced by Blondell as a testimony in favour of Presbyterianism, and by Hammond in favour of Prelacy; while it is very plain, I think, that Hermas' words really give no support to either side,* and that both these eminent men, in attempting to derive from it some support to their opposite views, on the subject of church government, were unduly influenced by a spirit of partisanship.

Sec. III.—*Clemens Romanus.*

We proceed to Clemens Romanus, described in after ages as Bishop of Rome, and now commonly known under that designation. Eusebius says that he was the same Clemens who is spoken of by Paul† as one of his fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life; and there is no historical ground to doubt the truth of this. Of course we do not believe that he, or any man, was at that early period Bishop of Rome, in the modern sense of the word bishop; but there is no reason to doubt that he occupied a prominent and influential place as a pastor in the Roman Church during the apostolic age, and held it till after the beginning of the second century. Many works have been ascribed to him, such as the Apostolic Canons and Constitutions, besides others of less value and importance, which can be proved to have been fabricated or compiled not earlier than the third, fourth, or perhaps even the fifth century, not to mention the five letters ascribed to him in the decretal epistles of the Popes, forged by the Church of Rome for Popish purposes most probably about the beginning of the ninth century. The only works ascribed to Clement, which have pretty generally been regarded as genuine ever since they were first published, about two centuries ago, from the Alexandrian

* Blondelli, Apol., p. 17; Hammond, Dissert., p. 284.

† Phil. iv. 3.

MS. in the British Museum—the only copy of them known to exist—are an epistle to the Corinthians, and a portion of what has been called a second epistle to the same church, but which seems rather to be a fragment of a sermon. The genuineness of the first epistle has been very generally admitted, while many have doubted of that of the second. There is no distinct internal evidence to lead us to entertain any doubt that the second might have been written by the author of the first, and in the apostolic age. The difference lies almost wholly in the external evidence, and more particularly in this, that whereas we have abundant evidence in declarations, quotations, and references found in the works of subsequent fathers, that Clement did write an epistle to the Corinthians, which was highly esteemed in the early ages, and even for a time read in the churches, and which was in substance the same as we now have under the designation of his first epistle, we have no satisfactory evidence of a similar kind that he wrote a second epistle, such as we have under that name. The question is one of very little practical importance, for the second epistle, as it is called, by itself possesses no historical or theological value,—*i.e.*, it gives us no information, directly or indirectly, either as to matters of fact or doctrine, which may not be more fully and obviously deduced from the first.

Clement's first epistle, then, to the Corinthians, is to be regarded as the earliest of the genuine remains of Christian antiquity, written by one who was a companion and fellow-worker of the apostles, and who occupied, while some of them were still alive, and probably by their appointment, an eminent station in the church. This, of course, invests it with a large measure of interest. We have no certain means of knowing when this epistle was written, or what circumstances gave occasion to the writing of it, except what are derived from the contents of the epistle itself. It does not contain any very certain notes or marks of time. The most explicit is, that it gives some indication of having been written soon after the church had endured a severe persecution, and this must have been either the persecution under Nero or that under Domitian. If the former, it must have been written soon after the last of Paul's epistles, and before the destruction of Jerusalem; if the latter, which is much the more probable, it must have been written about the end of the first century, or beginning of the second; and this is the opinion

most generally entertained, that it was written soon after the death of John, and the close of the canon of the New Testament.

The genuineness of this epistle as the production of Clement being well established and generally admitted, the next question concerns its integrity, or its freedom from material corruptions and interpolations. As there is but one MS. of it, and that not in a very good state of preservation, the text is by no means in a very satisfactory condition, though, of course, there are no various readings except what owe their origin to conjecture. But the main question is, whether there have been any intentional depravations or interpolations of the original text. Mosheim suspected that it had been interpolated by some person who wished to make the venerable father appear more learned and ingenious than he was; and who, accordingly, Mosheim thinks, has put in some things alien from the general simplicity of the substance and the style of it. There is no very obvious ground for this suspicion; the allegation is rather vague, and I do not think it can be supported by satisfactory instances. The only plausible instance of this kind is his referring to the well-known fable of the Phœnix, evidently believing the common story concerning it, as an argument or illustration in favour of the resurrection of the body. This may be regarded as a good proof that he was not raised by divine inspiration above ignorance and credulity in ordinary matters; and that, notwithstanding the relation in which he stood to the apostles, he was but a common man. But the credulity thus manifested is accordant enough with the views which Mosheim evidently entertained of Clement's general character. Mosheim gives in his larger work * a statement of the grounds of his opinion as to the interpolations of this epistle, and they are not such as, even if true, warrant his suspicion about the special character and object of the supposed interpolations. He refers, indeed, to Clement's credulity in adducing the story of the Phœnix; but he rests principally upon this, that the train of thought in the epistle is not very closely or very steadily directed to its leading object; that it is broken by digressions which have no very clear relation to the main subject. There is some truth in this representation, though I think Mosheim somewhat exaggerates the defects; but as the digressions partake much of the general

* Instit. Maj., p. 213.

character of the rest of the epistle, they can scarcely be regarded as interpolated by some one who wished, as Mosheim supposes, to make Clement appear more learned and ingenious than he found him.

Neander entertains the same opinion as Mosheim did as to Clement's epistle being somewhat interpolated by a later hand; but he rests his opinion upon a more definite and plausible, though, I am inclined to think, equally insufficient ground. He says,* "This letter, although, on the whole, genuine, is nevertheless not free from important interpolations; *e.g.*, a contradiction is apparent, since throughout the whole Epistle we perceive the simple relations of the earliest forms of a Christian church, as the Bishops and Presbyters are always put upon an equality, and yet in one passage (§ 40 and following) the whole system of the Jewish priesthood is transferred to the Christian church." Now, there can be no reasonable doubt that the whole scope and spirit and several particular statements of Clement's epistle, in so far as it throws any light upon the government which the apostles established, and upon the existing condition of the church when he wrote, are unequivocally and decidedly Presbyterian, or at least anti-Prelatic. But I am not satisfied that the passage to which Neander refers is, as he alleges, inconsistent with this. The adduction of such an argument by Neander, and the confidence with which he rests upon it as of itself a conclusive proof of interpolation, affords a strong indication of the deep sense which he entertained of the utter inconsistency between the spirit and government of the apostolic church, and those of a Prelatic or hierarchic one; and it is gratifying to find that this conviction was so deeply impressed upon the mind of one who may be justly regarded as the highest recent authority in church history, as to lead him at once to conclude that the only passage which Prelatists have ever produced from Clement as countenancing their claims, must necessarily, and for that very reason, be an interpolation. If the passage really required the interpretation, admitting of no other, put upon it by the Prelatists and Neander,—for in this special point of the import and bearing of this particular passage, he, of course, substantially agrees with them,—I think we would

* Neander, Hist. of Christ. Religion during First Three Centuries; Rose's translation, vol. ii., pp. 331-2; *vide* also vol. i., p. 199, note.

be entitled to reject it, as Neander does, upon the ground of its inconsistency with the rest of the epistle, and with the spirit of the apostolic and primitive church. But I am not satisfied that it requires the construction which Neander puts upon it. The matter stands thus:—

The church of Corinth was, it seems, involved at this time in divisions and contentions: a spirit of faction and insubordination had been manifested among them, and had assumed the form of casting off the authority of their pastors or presbyters. Clement, or rather the church of Rome, in whose name the letter runs, wrote this epistle to the church at Corinth, expostulating with them on their divisions, exhorting them to peace and harmony, and urging a return to the respect and submission due to their pastors or presbyters. This naturally led to a setting forth of the authority and claims of the ministerial office, and of those who held it. This, however, is done very briefly and very delicately, and in a spirit the very reverse of hierarchic assumption or insolence; Clement being evidently anxious principally about the state of their hearts and affections, both because this was most important in itself, and because here lay the true root of the evil, the contention and insubordination. He does, however, set forth the necessity of order and arrangement, and of each one keeping his own place, and executing rightly and peaceably his own functions. And in support *of these general positions* he does refer to the fact that the high priest, the priests, the Levites, and the people, had each their prescribed place and functions under the law, and that regulations were laid down in the Old Testament as to the administration of religious services. This is all he says about the Jewish priesthood, and the *only* application he makes of it is to inculcate the general obligation of order and subordination; and this affords no adequate ground for asserting, as Neander does, that he "transferred the whole system of the Jewish priesthood to the Christian church." The fathers of the third and fourth centuries often referred to the Jewish priesthood as establishing the claim of the Christian ministry in general to a kind and degree of sacredness and of power which the New Testament does not sanction, and came at length to regard the high priest, the priests, and Levites, as types and warrants of the threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons. Neander evidently viewed all this with the strongest disapprobation; and there can be no doubt that

the unwarranted transference of the system of the Jewish priesthood to the Christian church produced unspeakable mischief,—mischief which continually increased until it issued in the establishment of the only feasible antitype of the high priest upon the hierarchic system,—viz., the Pope as the monarch of the universal church. It is not altogether improbable that Clement's allusion to the Jewish priesthood may have contributed somewhat to introduce and encourage in subsequent times the baneful mode of thinking and arguing to which we have referred; but Clement is not chargeable with it, and should not be held responsible for it, as he merely referred to the arrangements connected with the Jewish priesthood and services, to illustrate the importance and obligation of *order in general;* just as he also referred with the same view to the discipline of an army. In short, he does not lay down any position, or deduce from the Jewish priesthood any inference, respecting either the dignity and authority of the Christian ministry in general, or the different orders of which it is composed, in the least inconsistent with the word of God, or in the least resembling or sanctioning the use or application made of this topic by the fathers of the third and fourth centuries. Nay, he expressly lays down, as one ground of the claim which their pastors or presbyters had to respect and obedience, that, in accordance with apostolic arrangements, they had been settled among them with the cordial consent of the whole church, *σύνευδόκησασης πάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας*; and this, certainly, was not a Jewish and hierarchic, but a scriptural and Presbyterian, principle. The passage in Clement, then, does not, as Neander alleges, sanction the "transference of the whole system of the Jewish priesthood to the Christian church," and should in fairness really be regarded in no other light than our own Gillespie's entitling his masterly and valuable book, designed to "vindicate the divine ordinance of church government," "Aaron's Rod Blossoming," by an allusion to the way in which God decided the controversy as to the right of the priesthood. There is no inconsistency, then, between this portion of Clement's epistle and its general scope and spirit, which are undoubtedly and unequivocally anti-Prelatic; and most certainly no such *clear* and *palpable* inconsistency as to warrant us in regarding it as an interpolation of later times.

Upon the whole, I am not convinced by the arguments of Mosheim or Neander that Clement's epistle is interpolated,

and think we have sufficient grounds for regarding it as a genuine and uncorrupted work of a companion of the apostles, and as thus a most valuable and interesting relic of Christian antiquity.

The striking contrast between the writings of the apostles and their immediate successors has been often remarked, and should never be overlooked or forgotten. Neander's observation upon this subject is this: "A phenomenon singular in its kind, is the striking difference between the writings of the apostles and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, who were so nearly their contemporaries. In other cases, transitions are wont to be gradual; but in this instance we observe a sudden change. There are here no gentle gradations, but all at once an abrupt transition from one style of language to another; a phenomenon which should lead us to acknowledge the fact of a special agency of the divine Spirit in the souls of the apostles."*

Clement's epistle shows him to have been a man of a thoroughly apostolical spirit, *i.e.*, a man who, understanding and feeling the power of the great doctrines of Christianity, was pervaded by zeal for the glory of God and love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and an earnest desire to promote the spiritual welfare of men; and who subordinated all other desires and ends to the manifestation of these principles, and the accomplishment of these objects. To this praise he is most fully entitled; but there is nothing else about him to call forth any great enthusiasm or admiration. We respect and esteem him as a devoted Christian, a faithful and zealous minister of the Lord; and this is the highest style of man: no higher commendation could be given. But there is nothing about Clement, so far as his epistle makes him known to us, that raises him above many in every age who have been born again of the word of God,—who have walked with Him, and have served Him faithfully in the gospel of His Son. There is nothing about him that should tempt us to look up to him as an oracle, or to receive implicitly whatever he might inculcate. He was indeed the friend and companion of the inspired apostles, and he *might* possibly have learned from them much which they knew by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But whether this were so or not, THE FACT IS UNQUESTIONABLE, that the Lord has not been pleased to employ

* Neander's General Church History, Torrey's translation, vol. ii., p. 438.

him in making known to us anything which is not at least as fully and clearly, and of course much more authoritatively, taught us in the canonical Scripture. Neither has God been pleased to give us through Clement almost any materials fitted to aid us in understanding any of the individual statements of the Bible. It appears from Clement's epistle that he held the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and the other fundamental principles of Christian truth; but he has not left us any statements upon any doctrinal points which may not be as easily misinterpreted or perverted as the sacred Scripture, and to which men of different and opposite opinions have not just as confidently appealed in support of their own views as they have to the word of God. He has, neither by his own exposition of Scripture, nor by communicating to us any information which an expositor of Scripture might improve and apply, cast any light upon any portion of the word of God, or afforded to others any materials for doing so. Indeed, his epistle contains plain enough proofs that no great reliance is to be placed upon his accurate interpretation, or correct and judicious application, of scriptural statements. Besides the testimony which, in common with all the rest of the fathers, he bears to the leading facts on which the Christian system is founded, as then known and believed, and to the existence and reception of the books of Scripture (and all this, of course, is invaluable), the only things for the knowledge of which we may be said to be indebted to Clement are these two: First, that the scriptural and apostolic identity of bishops and presbyters continued in the church after the apostles left the world; and, secondly, that pastors continued, as under the apostolic administration, to be settled only with the cordial consent of the church or congregation. These things have been made known to us through the instrumentality of Clement. *We* receive and value the information, but it is information which most of those who profess the greatest respect for the authority of the fathers, and who are in the habit of charging Presbyterians with disregarding and despising them, seem but little disposed to welcome. I will have occasion to advert to this more fully when I come to consider more formally the government of the early church; but enough has now been said for my present purpose, in so far as Clement is concerned, which is merely to give a very general view of the character and value of the writings of the apostolical fathers.

Sec. IV.—*Polycarp.*

Polycarp, another of the apostolical fathers, is usually, in accordance with the style of later writers, described as Bishop of Smyrna, though his pupil and admirer, Irenæus, in a letter to Florinus, preserved by Eusebius,* speaks of him long after his death, as "that blessed and apostolic *presbyter*." His name is not mentioned in Scripture, though some have supposed him to be the angel of the church at Smyrna, to whom the apocalyptic epistle was addressed by our Saviour. This is not probable; but there is no reason to doubt that he had conversed with the apostle John, and that he presided over the church at Smyrna for many years before his martyrdom, which took place about the year 160. He lived many years after all the rest of the fathers of the apostolic age; and if he had written much, and if his writings had been preserved to us, he might have given us much interesting and important information concerning the condition of the church during the first half of the second century. But the Head of the church has not been pleased to afford us this privilege, or to communicate to us instruction or information through this channel. The only thing of Polycarp's that has come down to us, is a very short epistle to the church at Philippi, consisting chiefly of plain, practical exhortations, wholly in the spirit, and very much in the words, of Scripture. It was written about the year 116, and thus belongs to exactly the same period as the epistles ascribed to Ignatius; and though Mosheim declines to give any decision upon the point, there is no sufficient reason, as Neander admits, for doubting its genuineness or suspecting it of interpolations.

Almost all the general observations we have made upon the character of Clement, and the value of his epistle, apply equally to Polycarp. Polycarp occupies an important place in bearing testimony, directly and indirectly, to the leading facts of Christianity, and to the general reception of the books of Scripture; but beyond this, there is not much of real value or importance that can be directly, or by implication, derived from his epistle. We learn from it nothing concerning Christ or the apostles, their actions or their doctrines, but what is at least as fully and plainly taught us in the canonical Scripture; and it contains nothing

* Lib. v., c. 20.

fitted to throw any light upon any of the more obscure and difficult portions of the word of God. It does give us some indications of what was the government of the church in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles; and these are in perfect accordance with the statements of Scripture and the informations of Clement. We learn from the inscription of this epistle, that other presbyters were associated with Polycarp in the government of the church at Smyrna; while we have no indication that he held a different office from theirs, or exercised any jurisdiction over them. We learn from it, also, that at this time the church of Philippi was governed by presbyters and deacons, just as we learn from Paul's epistle to the same church, written about sixty years before, that it was then governed by bishops and deacons. This might be regarded as a confirmation, if a thing so clear required to be confirmed, that in Scripture bishop and presbyter are the same; while it also shows that this identity, which the apostles established and the Scripture sanctions, continued for some time after the inspired rulers of the church had been taken away. The only other thing of any value or interest which we learn from Polycarp's epistle is, that instances occasionally occurred, even in that early period, in which presbyters fell into gross and open immorality, and were in consequence deposed from their office.

Sec. V.—*Epistle to Diognetus.*

There is a very interesting and valuable production now generally classed among those of the apostolical fathers, though formerly —I mean among the older writers on these subjects—it was little attended to or regarded, being hid, as it were, among the works of Justin Martyr, along with which, or rather as a part of which, it has commonly been published. It is in the form of a letter addressed to a person of the name of Diognetus; and the only reason apparently for ascribing it to Justin Martyr, and inserting it among his works, is, that we know that there was a philosopher of that name at the court of the emperor to whom one of Justin's apologies was addressed. We have no external evidence as to its author, or the time at which it was written. It bears *in gremio* to have been written by one who was a disciple of the apostles, and a teacher of the nations; and there is no evidence whatever, external or internal, fitted to throw any doubt upon the truth of this statement.

Some critics, judging from the style of thought and writing by which it is characterized, have pronounced a very confident opinion that it is the production of Justin; while others, judging by the same standard, have been equally confident that it could not have been written by the author of the works which are universally ascribed to him. The following short extract from Bishop Bull's Defence of the Nicene Creed, embodies the opinion upon this point of two very eminent authorities in patristic literature, viz., Bull himself, and Sylburgius, whom he quotes, who has published an edition of the works of Justin, "Epistolam autem illam ad Diognetum plane Justinum redolere, si cum caeteris ejus scriptis conferatur, et multa cum illis habere communia, recte observavit Fredericus Sylburgius."* On the other hand, one of the latest writers in this country on the subject—Dr Bennet—in a very valuable work, entitled "The Theology of the Early Christian Church exhibited in quotations from the writers of the first three centuries," expresses his opinion in the following terms: "The styles of Cicero and Tacitus, or those of Addison and Gibbon, are not more dissimilar than the composition of Justin and that of the writer to Diognetus. The sentences of the Martyr are loose, prolix, and inaccurate, with somewhat of a morose tone and a foreign air; while those of the letter writer have all the benevolent grace of the Christian, with all the elegant simplicity, luminous terseness, and logical finish, of a practised author in his native Greek."† And, in accordance with this view, Neander says of it, "Its language and thoughts, as well as the silence of the ancients, prove that the letter does not proceed from Justin."‡

I have no great confidence in the judgments even of eminent critics upon questions of this sort, unless there be materials for bringing them to be tested by some pretty definite and palpable standard; and, indeed, I have made these quotations chiefly for the purpose of pointing out how little reliance is to be placed upon decisions of points of this sort, which abound so much in the writings of continental critics, and are by many of them applied very boldly even to the different books of Scripture. In this particular case, however, I think that the internal evidence is in favour of ascribing the letter to Diognetus to a different author from Justin;

*. Bull's Works, vol. v., p. 191. Oxford, 1827.

† Bennet, pp. 6, 7.

‡ Neander, vol. ii., p. 348, Rose's translation.

and, as I have already remarked, there is no proof, nor even any strong probability against the truth of the author's statement, whoever he may have been, that he was a disciple of the apostles, though it has been suspected by some that the part of the epistle where this statement occurs is an interpolation.*

The letter is an answer to an inquiry which had been addressed to the author as to what was the character of the Christian religion, and what were the reasons why he had embraced it. It is, in point of thought, sentiment, and style, decidedly superior to the works of any of the apostolical fathers, and is deserving of more attention than it has commonly received. It gives a brief but spirited and effective summary of the grounds on which the Christians had abandoned Paganism and Judaism: this is followed by a description of the leading features in the character and personal conduct of the Christians of that period; and then all that is peculiar in their character and conduct is traced to the influence of the doctrines which they had been led upon God's authority to believe, of which a striking and scriptural summary is presented. It does not afford us any historical information about the government or the worship of the church at the time when it was written. It makes known to us nothing but what we know from the canonical Scriptures; but it shows that the doctrines which orthodox churches have generally deduced from Scripture were taught in the church after the apostles left it.

I have introduced here this brief reference to the letter to Diognetus, because it is similar in its character, and in the way in which it should be noticed, to the letters of Clement and Polycarp; and because the mention of it leaves nothing else to be adverted to under the head of the apostolical fathers, except the epistles of Ignatius, which are in many respects peculiar.

Sec. VI.—*Ignatius.*

Ignatius certainly lived in the time of the apostles, and occupied a position which led the writers of a subsequent age, when Prelacy had been established, to call him Bishop of Antioch. We know little of his history, except that he was condemned to death by the emperor Trajan for his adherence to Christ; that he

* Semisch on Justin, i., pp. 193, 195; Neander, ii., p. 348.

was in consequence carried to Rome, where he was exposed to wild beasts, and gained the crown of martyrdom in the year, as some think, 107, but more probably in the year 116. We have several epistles which profess to have been written by Ignatius during his journey from Antioch to Rome to endure the sentence of death which had been pronounced upon him.

The genuineness and integrity of these epistles have given rise to a controversy which is so voluminous, and involves so many points of detail connected with the early history of the church, that it would be no easy matter to give an abstract of it. This would be of no great importance; but what increases the difficulty of saying anything about them is, that it is no easy matter to make up one's mind as to what is really true, or even most probable, in regard to them.

I have no doubt, indeed, that the epistles of Ignatius, as we now have them, even in the purest and most uncorrupted form, did not proceed from his hand; but whether they ought to be regarded as wholly fabricated, or merely as interpolated by some over-zealous defender of the threefold order of bishop, priests, and deacons, it is not easy to decide. Upon the revival of letters, fifteen epistles were published, purporting to be written by Ignatius; but it was soon seen and generally admitted that eight of these, including one addressed by him to the apostle John, and another addressed to the Virgin Mary, were the forgeries of a much later age. A considerable diversity of opinion prevailed as to the genuineness and integrity of the other seven. The Reformers, being Presbyterians, were not likely to think favourably of the genuineness and integrity of these epistles; and their impressions upon this point were confirmed by finding that the Socinians produced from them passages which could not easily be reconciled with orthodox views upon the subject of the Trinity. Calvin, accordingly, did not hesitate to say,* that there is nothing more senseless than the stuff that has been collected under the name of this martyr. All the earliest defenders of the Church of England—Whitgift, Bancroft, Bilson, Downson†—appealed to them with confidence in favour of Prelacy. At length Archbishop Usher discovered in a MS., and published at Oxford in 1644, a Latin translation of the seven epistles of Ignatius, differ-

* Instit., B. I., c. xiii., sec. 29. † Pearson's Introd. to Vindiciæ.

ing considerably from any edition that was previously known. The epistles in this translation were considerably shorter; they were free from Arianism, and did not by any means exhibit such clear and palpable proofs of fabrication. About the same time, by a remarkable coincidence, the celebrated scholar, Isaac Vossius, discovered and published a Greek MS. of the epistles of Ignatius, which had been preserved at Florence, corresponding fully with Usher's Latin version, so far as it went, but containing only six epistles instead of seven. This greatly encouraged the defenders of Prelacy and Ignatius. They immediately abandoned the old edition, which formerly they had defended as well as they could, admitting now that it had been corrupted and interpolated by a later hand; while they maintained the genuineness of the shorter and more modern edition.

In consequence of this discovery, all the discussions about the epistles of Ignatius, which are more than 200 years old, are deprived of their relevancy and value, since they bear reference to an edition which was then abandoned by Romanists and Prelatists, and has not since been formally defended, so far as I know, except by Whiston, who was an Arian, and by one or two German neologians. It was at once conceded by anti-Prelatic writers, that many of the objections which had been adduced against the older edition of Ignatius did not apply to this shorter and more modern one; but it was not universally admitted that even this more pure edition exhibited the genuine letters of Ignatius, or at least exhibited them without considerable interpolations. Salmasius and Blondell, who have written in opposition to Prelacy with an extent of erudition that has never been surpassed, declared that, after examining the edition of Vossius and Usher, they were still satisfied that we had no genuine epistles of Ignatius; or, at least, that even in their purest form they were grossly corrupted. Hammond defended Ignatius against their attacks; and this produced a controversy on the subject between him and Dr Owen. Daillé, or Dallaeus, a very learned divine of the French Protestant Church, soon after wrote a book to prove that the epistles ascribed to Ignatius were forged by some friend of the hierarchy about the end of the third century. Bishop Pearson's celebrated work, "Vindiciæ Epistolarum S. Ignatii," of which the Episcopalians have ever since continued to boast as unanswerable, was an answer to this book of Daillé's, and professed to prove that the

epistles of Ignatius, as published by Usher and Vossius, are genuine and uncorrupted. An answer was written to Pearson by another French divine, Larroque, entitled "Observationes in Ignatianas Pearsonii Vindicias;" and then the controversy terminated.

Since that time Prelatists have generally continued, upon the ground of what was proved by Hammond and Pearson, to maintain, and Presbyterians, upon the ground of what was proved by Daillé and Larroque, to deny, their genuineness, or at least their integrity. Perhaps it may be said to be the most prevalent opinion among anti-Prelatic writers, that the epistles of Ignatius, in their shorter and purer form, or at least six out of the seven,—for not only Mosheim, but Archbishop Usher, rejected the epistle to Polycarp,—are genuine, *i.e.*, were in substance written by Ignatius, while they have been generally of opinion that some parts of them, especially those on which Prelatists found, were interpolated by a later hand. Neander expresses his opinion of them in the following terms:—"Certainly, these epistles contain passages which at least bear completely upon them the character of antiquity. This is particularly the case with the passages directed against Judaism and Docetism; but even the shorter and more trustworthy edition is very much interpolated."* A Presbyterian, *i.e.*, one who is convinced that the canonical Scriptures give no countenance to the threefold order in the ministry,—bishops, priests, and deacons,—and that the Scriptures uniformly use the words bishops and presbyters synonymously or indiscriminately, as descriptive of one and the same class of functionaries, can scarcely read the epistles of Ignatius, and Daillé's treatise upon the subject, without being strongly disposed to adopt his theory, viz., that they were forged in the end of the third century by some ardent and unscrupulous supporter of the hierarchy. And yet, I think, it must in fairness be admitted, that Daillé has not thoroughly proved *this;* and that so much that is plausible has been adduced by Pearson in answer to many of his arguments that the proof of an *entire* fabrication of the whole is not brought home very forcibly to one's understanding. After wading through a great deal of very intricate and confused discussion, especially in regard to alleged anachronisms in reference to heresies which Daillé contends were not heard of till after Ignatius' martyrdom, one does feel somewhat at a loss to

* Neander, vol. ii., p. 334.

lay his hand definitely upon anything, except the distinction between bishops, presbyters, and deacons, in regard to which he would undertake to affirm that Ignatius could not have written it. The external evidence in favour of their genuineness in the gross —*i.e.*, in favour of the position that Ignatius did write some epistles, such as those we now have under his name—must be admitted to be strong. Polycarp, in the conclusion of his epistle, speaks of his having made a collection of the epistles of Ignatius, and sent them to the church of Philippi for their edification. And Daillé's notion, that this was an interpolated addition to Polycarp's letter, has no solid foundation to rest upon. He founds much upon the allegation, that these epistles are not alluded to by any other writer from Polycarp to Eusebius, who wrote in the early part of the fourth century. This would not be quite conclusive, even if true. But it has been alleged, on the other side, that they are referred to and quoted by Irenæus in the second, and Origen in the third century. Daillé maintains that the works ascribed to Origen, in which these references occur, are not his; and it is really not easy to decide whether they are or not. But he certainly is not successful in getting over the testimony of Irenæus. That father made a statement, which is not only found in his own writings, but is also expressly quoted from him by Eusebius, to this effect, that one of our martyrs who was condemned to the wild beasts said —and then he gives a quotation, which we still find in Ignatius' epistle to the Romans. And Daillé's only answer to this is, that there is no express mention of an *epistle*, and that it is not said that he wrote, but that he said this; as if this saying of Ignatius might have been handed down by tradition, without having been committed to writing. But this is forced and strained, as it is evident that Irenæus most probably would have used the word said, and not wrote, as is common in such cases, even if he had been quoting from a writing. Daillé admits that the epistles, as we have them, were extant in the time of Eusebius, and were regarded by him, as well as by Athanasius and Jerome, who flourished in the same century, as genuine; and this must in fairness be admitted to be a pretty strong evidence that they are so.

The ground on which Neander was convinced that the epistles of Ignatius, even in their purest form, were very much interpolated, is the same principle in virtue of which he was convinced that there was an interpolation in the epistle of Clement,—a

principle just and weighty in itself, though as we think misapplied by Neander in the case of Clement. It is in substance this,—that there are statements in Ignatius which plainly assert the existence of a Prelatic hierarchic government in the church, in contradiction at once to the sacred Scriptures, and to *every other* uninspired document of the apostolic, and even of a later age. We cannot defend Ignatius, as we endeavoured to defend Clement, from the application of this sound and important principle of judging. There can be no doubt that Ignatius' epistles are crammed, *usque ad nauseam*, with bishops, presbyters, and deacons, evidently spoken of as three distinct orders or classes of functionaries, and that obedience and submission to them are exacted in a very absolute and imperious style, nay, that they exhibit something of the Popish principle of vicarious priestly responsibility; for he pledges his soul for theirs who are subject to the bishops, presbyters, and deacons; and yet these epistles have been constantly held up by the most learned Episcopalians as the very sheet anchor of their cause.* They seem now at last to be getting half ashamed of the strength of his statements; and one of the latest Prelatic writers I have seen upon this subject, Conybeare, in his Bampton Lectures for 1839, makes the following candid, and yet very cautious, admission upon this point. After giving some extracts from the epistles of Ignatius, embodying very excellent practical exhortations, he continues in the following words:—"All Christians, of every sect, will agree in admiring these sentiments; but the great point on which in every epistle Ignatius most strenuously and repeatedly insists, is the necessity of a strict conformity to the discipline of the Church, and a devoted submission to Episcopal authority, which he makes to rest on the same principles with our obedience to our Lord Himself. It is needless to remark that such passages have afforded the great reason why so many writers of the Presbyterian party have been so reluctant to admit the authenticity of these remains; and we, while it is most satisfactory to our minds to find so early a testimony in confirmation of the primitive and apostolical origin of the constitution faithfully preserved by our own church, yet even we ourselves shall probably shrink from some of the language

* Even Milner is able to swallow it all, pp. 55–58. Edit. 1842.

employed in these epistles, as seeming excessive and overstrained. We do trust indeed that our Episcopal authority is in and through the Lord, and most suitable for the edification of His body the Church; and we may hope that this was all that Ignatius meant to imply; but we must regret, that in the somewhat overcharged and inflated style of his rhetoric, he has too often been betrayed into expressions which seem almost to imply a parity of authority over the Church, between its earthly superintendent, and its heavenly Head." *

At present, however, we have to do, not with the general subject of the government of the early church, but merely with the integrity of Ignatius' epistles; and it is certainly not easy to believe that a pious and devoted minister who was a companion of the apostles could have written as he is represented to have done on this subject. Daillé's leading argument upon this point is this: no other writer of the apostolic age, and indeed no writer during the whole of the second century, has spoken upon this subject in a style similar to that which Ignatius has employed; and, more particularly, no other writer of this period has *uniformly* employed the terms bishop and presbyter, as descriptive of two distinct and separate classes of functionaries,—the bishop being of a higher, and the presbyter of a lower, order; and if so, it follows, that these portions of the epistles ascribed to him did not proceed from his pen, but owed their origin to a later age. Now, this position, we think, Daillé has incontrovertibly established. Pearson has not answered his argument, but, as Larroque has conclusively proved, is chargeable in the whole discussion with practising the sophism called *ignoratio elenchi*, by running off into a general investigation of the whole subject of the government of the church during the second century, instead of meeting fairly the critical and philological argument on which Daillé based his conclusion that these parts of the epistles at least were not written by Ignatius. The argument is a very simple one: No other writer of the first and second centuries, inspired or uninspired, has *uniformly* used the words bishop and presbyter as descriptive of two distinct classes of functionaries, the one higher and the other lower; this distinction is uniformly and systematically made in the epistles of Ignatius; and therefore these epistles, or at least these parts of them, were not written by one

* Conybeare, Bampton Lectures, Lect. ii., pp. 83–84.

who lived in the beginning of the second century. The conclusion is inevitable upon all the recognised principles of fair literary criticism, if the premises be established.

It is to be remarked that the main position is this: no other writer of the first two centuries has uniformly observed the distinction between the words bishop and presbyter as Ignatius has done, and as was done generally in the latter part of the third century, and universally afterwards. It is no disproof of this position to show that there are writers of the second century who give some indications of the existence *de facto* of some distinction between bishops and presbyters before the end of that century, for this is not denied by Presbyterians; nor even to show that this distinction was then generally recognised and established,—and yet this is all that Pearson has attempted to prove. All this might be true, and yet the striking and marked peculiarity *in the use of the words* might still afford a satisfactory proof that the epistles ascribed to Ignatius were defective, either in genuineness, or at least in integrity. The common or indiscriminate use of the names bishop and presbyter in the New Testament is now universally conceded by Episcopalians, though many of the older Prelatists denied it, or at least refused to admit it. There is *no* distinction in the use of them to be traced in the apostolical fathers Clement and Polycarp, but the reverse. They were sometimes, if not always, used indiscriminately by *all* the other writers of the second century (who used them at all, for Justin Martyr does not use them),—by Papias, Irenæus, and Pius, Bishop of Rome. There are plain traces of the same indiscriminate use of the words in Clemens Alexandrinus, and Tertullian, who lived partly in the third century, and it has not wholly disappeared even in Origen and Cyprian. But it appears no more thereafter in the ordinary unintentional usage of language during the subsequent history of the church. Now here is the remarkable peculiarity, that while all the inspired writers before him use the words bishop and presbyter synonymously and indiscriminately,—while his only contemporaries whose writings have come down to us, Clement and Polycarp, follow faithfully in their footsteps,—while the same indiscriminate use of the words is exhibited more or less fully, though not uniformly, by all the *subsequent* writers of the second century,—Ignatius, who died at the latest in 116, alone adheres rigidly, uniformly, and without a single exception,

to a distinction in the use and application of these words which grew up in the course of the third century, was not fully established till the fourth, and has continued ever since.

Now, this argument against the integrity at least of the epistles of Ignatius, so obvious and so conclusive, and bearing so directly and influentially upon the precise point which has given to the controversy about the genuineness and integrity of these epistles its chief value and interest, Pearson has not answered, nay, he can scarcely with propriety be said to have attempted to answer it; for he has not professed to produce what alone could constitute an answer,—any one author of the first two centuries, inspired or uninspired, of whom he affirms that he uniformly observes this distinction in the use of the words; and yet there is perhaps no one book of which Episcopalian controversialists are more in the habit of boasting as conclusive and unanswerable than Pearson's "Vindiciæ," while they constantly allege that Presbyterians have no reason for rejecting Ignatius' epistles, or any part of them, except that they are decisive against their views. As Ignatius not only observes this distinction uniformly, wherever he has occasion to use the words, but as he is constantly ringing changes upon the bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and the necessity and advantages of honouring and obeying them,—this may be fairly regarded as a conclusive proof that, as Neander says, "even the shorter and more trustworthy edition is *very much* interpolated."

Ignatius, in his epistle to the Trallians, boasts—though Archbishop Wake, in his translation, endeavours to conceal this—that he was able to write to them about things so exalted that it would choke them if he spoke about them, and that he could describe to them the places of the angels, and the several companies of them under their respective princes. In his letter to the Christians at Rome, while on his way to that city, condemned to be exposed to the wild beasts, he besought them to address no prayers to God, and to use no influence with men, in order to procure a removal of the sentence: he declared that he would coax, and even compel, the wild beasts to devour him; and that he hoped that they would devour him wholly, so that none of his body should be left. When we read such things as these in the epistles ascribed to Ignatius, we are tempted to wish that their spuriousness could be established; or, at least, that the interpolations could be proved to extend beyond his frequent references to bishops, presbyters, and

deacons. But perhaps we are not warranted in saying that it was not possible, though it is certainly very improbable, that an eminently holy and devoted minister, who had conversed with the apostles—and such Ignatius was—when soon to be offered up as a martyr for Christ's sake, could have manifested such palpable proofs of the infirmities of humanity; though, if he did write in this strain, we can attach little weight to his authority, and must rank him, in point of good sense and correct Christian feeling, greatly below his contemporaries, Clement and Polycarp. We are, however, warranted in saying, that no man paced in the circumstances of Ignatius *could* have constantly and uniformly used the words bishop and presbyter as descriptive of two different and separate classes of functionaries, and that this uniform use of them unequivocally indicates a later age.

It is also a very strong confirmation of the position that the epistles of Ignatius are corrupted, if not entirely spurious, that we have some works bearing the name of Dionysius the Areopagite, a convert of Paul's, mentioned in the book of the Acts, which are now universally, by Protestants at least, regarded as having been forged, and not earlier than the fourth century, and which in several points bear a resemblance to the epistles of Ignatius. The pretended Dionysius brings out fully and in detail that minute knowledge of the angels and their ranks which Ignatius possessed, but which in mercy to the Trallians he concealed; and the main scope and objects of his works are to invest with apostolic sanction the threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons, and the whole mass of rites and ceremonies which disfigured and polluted the church, even in the fourth century. The book of Daillé, to which I have so often referred, is directed equally against the genuineness of the writings ascribed to Dionysius and of those ascribed to Ignatius, and is entitled "De Scriptis, quæ sub Dionysii Areopagitæ et Ignatii Antiocheni nominibus circumferuntur."*

This is, I think, a fair view of the controversy, as it has been generally conducted until recent times. But Mr Cureton's publication of the Syriac version of these epistles, recently discovered in a monastery in Egypt, and now in the British Museum, materially changes the whole aspect of the controversy, and war-

* Geneva, 1666.

rants and requires a decision in regard to most of the topics that used to be discussed in it, in opposition to that which the Episcopalians have so long and so strenuously contended for. This MS. of a Syriac version seems to have been written about the sixth century. It contains only the three epistles above mentioned, and exhibits them in a briefer and more compendious form than even the shorter edition of Usher and Vossius, except that some things found in the older editions in the fourth and fifth chapters of the epistle to the Trallians, about his knowledge of the angels, are found in the Syriac, in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Mr Cureton, who seems to have discharged his duties with great diligence and learning, judgment and candour, has proved beyond all reasonable doubt, that there is no ground for regarding as genuine anything ascribed to Ignatius, except these three epistles in this Syriac version; that, of course, a large portion of the objections of Daillé and other Presbyterians, at least to the integrity of the epistles, were well founded; that the ground taken by Pearson and other Episcopalians is wholly untenable; and that, therefore, writings were forged in early times in the name of Ignatius, as well as of Clement and Dionysius the Areopagite, to serve the cause of Prelacy. The Episcopalians seem very unwilling to admit these positions. They seem unable to imitate the candour of Mr Cureton; and both the *English* and the *Quarterly Reviews* have endeavoured to answer his arguments, and to maintain the ground occupied by Pearson. But this will not do. The case is clear and hollow, and cannot stand investigation. It has long been a sort of article of faith in the Church of England, handed down by tradition, that Pearson's *Vindiciæ* is unanswerable. Cureton, in the preface to his *Corpus Ignatianum* (p. 14, Note), says: "In the whole course of my inquiry respecting the Ignatian epistles I have never met with one person who professes to have read Bishop Pearson's celebrated book; but I was informed by one of the most learned and eminent of the present Bench of Bishops, that Porson, after having perused the *Vindiciæ*, had expressed to him his opinion that it was a 'very unsatisfactory work.'"

But while it may now be considered settled that there is nothing else of what has been ascribed to Ignatius genuine except these three epistles, according to the Syriac version, the question remains, Are we bound now to receive these as genuine and unin-

terpolated? The existence of this Syriac version, omitting, as it does, most of the things in the older editions which were founded upon by Daillé and other Presbyterians, as militating against their genuineness, or at least their integrity, must in fairness be admitted to give some confirmation to the genuineness of the epistles which it contains. But it does not establish their integrity or entire freedom from interpolations. They still contain the boasting about knowing celestial and angelic matters—the eagerness for martyrdom—the desire that the wild beasts should devour him wholly. This is in the epistle to the Romans; and in the epistle to the Ephesians, there is the statement about Satan being ignorant of the virginity of Mary and the birth of Christ, though they omit here the mention of his death, and the surpassing brightness of the star of Bethlehem, which the former editions had. Of the mass of stuff about bishops, presbyters, and deacons, with which the former editions were crammed, there is only one passage left. It is in the epistle to Polycarp, c. vi., but it is a strong and offensive one. It is this. After having exhorted them not to marry without the counsel of the bishop, he adds this general exhortation, as translated from the Syriac by Mr Cureton: "Look to the bishop, that God may also look upon you. I will be instead of the souls of those who are subject to the Bishop, and the Presbyter, and the Deacons; with them may I have a portion near God." This is quite the same in the longer and shorter of the old editions as in the Syriac, except that the longer has "presbytery" instead of "presbyters." There is certainly nothing in the least resembling this, either in language or in spirit, in the New Testament, or in Clement and Polycarp, and it may be fairly regarded as an interpolation. Ignatius, in the Syriac version, occupies a place very similar to Clement's, in whose epistle Neander pronounced one passage to be a clear interpolation, because of its anti-apostolic, hierarchic tendency. We think the application of the principle wrong as concerns the passage in Clement; but the principle is a sound one, and it seems fairly to apply to this only remaining prelatic passage in Ignatius.*

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* The last three chapters of the epistle to Polycarp which contains this passage, are alleged to be interpolated by Cooper in his Free Church of Ancient Christendom, Appen. K., p. 388. Bunsen's Ignatian Epistles and his Hippolytus.

Such are the apostolical fathers, and such their writings, in so far as God has been pleased to preserve them, and to afford us the means of distinguishing them. And I think this brief survey of them must be quite sufficient to show the truth of the two positions which I laid down in introducing this topic—viz., first, that we have no certain information, nothing on which we can rely with confidence as a mere question of evidence, as to what the inspired apostles taught and ordained, except what is contained in the canonical Scriptures; and, secondly, that there are no men, except the authors of the inspired books of Scripture, to whom there is any plausible pretence for calling upon us to look up as guides or oracles. It was manifestly, as the result proves, not the purpose of God to convey to us, through the instrumentality of the immediate successors of the apostles, any important information as to the substance of the revelation which He made to man, in addition to what, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has been embodied in the sacred Scriptures, and has in His good providence been preserved pure and uncorrupted. The apostolical fathers hold an important place as witnesses to the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the Scriptures; but this is their principal value. There is much about them, both in their character and in their writings, which is fitted to confirm our faith in the divine origin of Christianity, and the divine authority of the Scriptures; but there is nothing about them that should tempt us to take them instead of, or even in addition to, the evangelists and apostles as our guides. They exhibit a beautiful manifestation of the practical operation of Christian principle, and especially of ardent love to the Saviour, and entire devotedness to His service, which is well fitted to impress our minds, and to constrain us to imitation; but there is also not a little about them fitted to remind us that we must be followers of them only as they were of Christ, and that it is only the word of God that is fitted to make us perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

CHAPTER V.

THE HERESIES OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

We have very plain intimations given us in the sacred Scriptures, that even while the apostles lived, errors of various kinds were broached, and disturbed the purity and peace of the church; and we have predictions that these would continue and extend. We have not much explicit information given us in the New Testament as to what these errors or heresies were. But they engaged the attention, and they occupy a prominent place in the works of the Christian authors who lived after the apostles, and the heresies fill a considerable department in the ecclesiastical history of these early ages. Irenæus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who flourished during the latter half of the second century, and who has many claims upon our respect, wrote a book against the heresies of the age, which has come down to us, though chiefly in a Latin translation; and this, with the remains of Hippolytus, is the main source of our information as to the doctrines of the earlier heretics. Irenæus was accustomed—and in this he was followed by the generality of the fathers who succeeded him, including both those who have written fully and formally upon heresies, such as Epiphanius and Augustine, and those who have adverted to the subject more incidentally—to use the word heresy, not as we do, to denote an important deviation from sound doctrine made by one who professed to believe in the divine mission of Jesus and the authority of the Scriptures, but any system of error into which any reference to Christ and Christianity was introduced, even though those who maintained it could not with propriety be called Christians, and could not have been members of any Christian church. We find that errors of this sort did, in point of fact, disturb the purity and the peace of the early church, that they are adverted to and condemned by the apostles in their addresses to the churches, and that they engaged much of the atten-

tion of the early fathers; and as *they* called them heresies, they continue to rank under that name in ecclesiastical history, though the word is now commonly used in a more limited sense, and though these early heresies might with more propriety be called forms of infidelity. Many of the notions explained and discussed under the head of the heresies of the first and second centuries are very like the ravings of madmen who followed no definite standard, whether natural or supernatural, whether reason or Scripture, but who gave full scope to their imaginations in the formation of their systems. They did not exert a permanent or extensive direct influence, because they had no plausible foundation to rest upon. An investigation, therefore, into the history and precise tenets of the heretics of the first two centuries,—and this observation applies also in some measure to the third century,—is rather curious, than either very interesting or useful. The monstrous systems of these heretics did not take a very firm hold of men's minds, and cannot be said to have directly influenced to any considerable extent the views of the church in subsequent ages. They were, indeed, connected with some questions which have always occupied and still occupy the minds of reflecting men, such as the origin and cause of evil, and the creation of the world as connected with the subject of the origin of evil. But the early heretics, though they propounded a variety of theories upon these subjects, cannot be said to have thrown any light upon them, or to have materially influenced the views of men who have since investigated these topics, under the guidance either of a sounder philosophy, or of more implicit deference to God's revelation.

Gnosticism, indeed, which may be properly enough used as a general name for the heretical systems of the first two centuries,—and in some measure also of the third, although in the third century Manichæism obtained greater prominence,—forms a curious chapter in the history of the human mind, and may furnish some useful and instructive lessons to the observer of human nature, and to the philosophical expounder of its capacities and tendencies. It strikingly illustrates some of the more simple and obvious doctrines of Scripture about the natural darkness of men's understandings. It is a striking commentary upon the apostle's declaration that the world by wisdom knew not God, and that men professing to be wise became fools. But it is not of any great importance in a purely theological point of view, inasmuch as it

throws little light upon the real system of divine truth, and has had little direct influence upon the subsequent labours of men in investigating, under better auspices, the subjects which it professed to explain. Indeed, the principal practical use of a knowledge of the early heresies is, that an acquaintance with them does throw some light upon some portions of the word of God which refer to them. This is an object which, indeed, is of the highest value, and it may be said to be in some measure the standard by which we should estimate the real value of all knowledge. The highest object at which we can aim, so far as the mere exercise of the understanding is concerned, is to attain to an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the revealed will of God; and whatever contributes to promote this, and just in proportion as it does so, is to be esteemed important and valuable. We should desire to ascertain, as far as possible, the true meaning and application of every portion of God's word; and appropriate and apply aright everything that is fitted to contribute to this result. We can easily conceive that the writings of the apostolical fathers *might* have conveyed to us information which would have thrown much light upon some of the more obscure and difficult passages in the New Testament. They might, for example, have given us information which would have settled some of those chronological questions in the history of Paul, and of his journeys and epistles, which, from the want of any definite materials in Scripture to decide them, have given rise to much discussion. They might have given us information which would have rendered more obvious and certain the interpretation of some passages which are obscure and have been disputed, because we know little of the prevalent customs that may have been referred to, or of the condition and circumstances of the church in general, or of some particular church at the time. They might possibly have conveyed to us information upon many points which, without their so intending it, might have admitted of a useful application in this way, and to these objects. And we might have made this application of the information, and thus have *established* the true meaning of some portions of Scripture, without ascribing to those who conveyed the information to us any authority, or attaching any weight to their opinion, as such. All this might have been; but we have had occasion to show that, in point of fact, God has not been pleased to convey to us, through the early ecclesiastical

writers, much information that admits of a useful practical application in the interpretation of Scripture.

One exception, however, to this remark,—one case in which the information communicated to us by subsequent writers does give us *some* assistance in understanding the meaning and application of some passages of the New Testament, and the propriety and suitableness of the words in which they are expressed,—is to be found in this matter of the early heresies, while it is also the chief practical purpose to which a knowledge of the early heresies is to be applied. Of the persons mentioned by *name* in the New Testament, as having in some way set themselves in opposition to the apostles, or as having deserted them, viz., Hermogenes, Phygellus, Demas, Hymenæus, Philetus, Alexander, and Diotrephes, we have no certain or trustworthy information in early writers, in addition to the very brief notices given of them in Scripture; for we cannot regard the explanations given of the passages, when they are mentioned by commentators of the fourth and fifth centuries,* as of any value or weight, except in so far as they seem to be fairly suggested by the Scripture notices. The most specific indication given us in the New Testament of a heresy, combined with the mention of names, is Paul's statement regarding Hymenæus and Philetus, of whom he tells† that "concerning the truth,"—*i.e.*, in a matter of doctrine,—"they have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some." Of Hymenæus and Philetus personally we learn nothing from subsequent writers; we have no information throwing any direct light upon the specific statement of Paul as to the nature of the heresy held by them. But, in what we learn generally from subsequent writers as to the views of some of the Gnostic sects, we have materials for explaining it. We know that the Gnostic sects in general denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The Docetæ, more especially, denying the reality of Christ's body, of course denied the reality of His death and resurrection; and having thus taken out of the way the great pattern and proof of the resurrection, it was an easy step to deny it altogether. Still some explanation must, if possible, be given of statements that seemed to assert or imply a resurrection of the body. Paul tells us that these men said it was past already; and

* Ittigius, de Hæres., pp. 84–86. † 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.

here the inquiry naturally arises, What past thing was it to which they pointed as being the resurrection? Now Irenæus informs us* that Menander, one of the leading Gnostics of the first century, taught that Gnostic baptism was the resurrection, and the only resurrection that was to be expected. And when we thus learn that there was a sect of Gnostics in the apostolic age who allegorized away the resurrection into baptism, we can have no difficulty in seeing what Hymenæus and Philetus meant when they said that it was past already.†

In regard to Simon Magus and the Nicolaitanes, who are mentioned in Scripture, we have a good deal of information given us by subsequent writers; but it is not of a kind fitted to throw any light upon the statements made in Scripture concerning them. It is new and additional information regarding them, which there is nothing in Scripture to lead us to expect. It is not inconsistent, indeed, with Scripture, and *may be* all true. As it throws no light upon the statements of Scripture concerning them, but is purely historical in its character and application, and as even historically it is attended with considerable difficulties and no small measure of uncertainty, I shall not further enlarge upon it.

The heresies, however, to which there seem to be the most frequent references in Scripture, and a knowledge of which throws most light upon the interpretation of its statements, are those of Cerinthus and the Docetæ.

As the first century advanced, and the apostles were most of them removed from this world, the Gnostic heresies seem to have become somewhat more prevalent, to have been brought to bear more upon some of the subjects comprehended in the Christian revelation, and to have affected more the state and condition of the church. The Docetæ denied the reality of Christ's body, and of course of His sufferings; and maintained that these were mere phantoms or appearances; and we find that the apostle John repeatedly referred to this heresy, and that an acquaintance with its nature throws some light upon the true import of some of his statements. We find also, both in the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, and in the Gospel of John, references to the doctrines of Cerinthus. We know that the doctrine of the crucifixion

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* B. i., c. 23.

† Buddei Eccles. Apost., c. v.; Moshemii Inst. Maj., p. 319. Burton's Bampton Lec., p. 135, and note 57.

of the Saviour was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. And, accordingly, we find that very soon some who did not altogether deny Christ's divine mission, began to explain away His crucifixion. These attempts were made even in the apostolic age; and we have pretty full accounts of them as managed by some Gnostic heretics in the second century, such as Saturninus and Valentinus. Some have supposed that Paul referred to them when he spoke of *enemies of the cross of Christ;* but the expression in that passage seems rather to be taken in a wider and less specific sense. But there can be no reasonable doubt that John referred to them in his epistles. Indeed, the very first sentence of his first epistle may be fairly regarded as bearing a reference to the heresy of the Docetæ: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon," or carefully inspected, "and our hands have handled of the Word of life." The apostle was not likely to have added the last clause, "which our hands have handled," but because he had a reference to some such error as that which we know was taught by the Docetæ, or Phantasiastæ, as they were also called, who held that Christ's body was such only in appearance,—that it was a mere phantasm, which appeared indeed a body to the eyes of men, but would not admit of being handled. The heresy of the Docetæ plainly implied a denial of the incarnation of Christ in any proper sense,—a denial that He had taken to Himself a true body; in short, a denial that He had come in the flesh. Hence the apostle says, in the beginning of the fourth chapter, "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world,"—a statement illustrated by one of Jerome's, viz., that even while the apostles were alive, and the blood of Christ still fresh in Judæa, men arose who maintained that His body was a mere phantasm or deceitful appearance. The statement that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is a plain assertion of His incarnation, and clearly implies that He existed previously to His coming, and that contemporaneously with His coming He took flesh, or assumed a true and real body. It is an assertion of His incarnation, in the sense in which we have explained it, against whoever may deny it, and

upon whatever ground the denial may rest, and is equally conclusive against the modern Socinians and the ancient Docetæ; but the knowledge of what were the views of the ancient Docetæ throws light upon the import of the expression, and illustrates the propriety and exact bearing of the words employed.

It is true that, if John here intended more immediately to contradict the heresy of the Docetæ, the declaration that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, cannot be regarded as in itself equivalent to, or co-extensive with, the position that He assumed human nature. It would in that case merely assert that He, having previously existed, took, when He came, a true body, without asserting also that He took likewise a reasonable soul. And indeed the controversy as to the soul of Christ is one of later origin than the apostolic age, or the first century. But there is no difficulty in proving from other parts of Scripture, that Jesus Christ, when He came, took a reasonable human soul, as well as a true body. Incarnation, in the literal meaning of the word—ἐνσάρκωσις—is here expressly asserted, implying a previous existence, and an assumption of a true and real body as contemporaneous and identical with His coming or with His appearance in this world. An assertion of the reality of Christ's flesh or body, while He was on earth, was all that was necessary in condemning the Docetæ, and warning the church against them; but under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, it is expressed in words which plainly imply a previous existence, so that the statement is, as we have said, just as conclusive against modern as against ancient heretics.

We have said also that the apostle John referred to the heresy of Cerinthus; and indeed Irenæus tells us that John wrote his gospel principally in order to oppose the doctrines which Cerinthus had been propagating; and we know of no ground, external or internal, for disbelieving this. We learn from the testimony of subsequent writers, that Cerinthus held—and in this he was followed by some other Gnostic heretics of the second century—that Jesus and Christ must be carefully distinguished from each other: that Jesus was a mere man; that Christ, one of the ἀϊώνες, descended upon Him at His baptism, dwelt in Him till He was about to suffer death, and then left Him, and returned to the pleroma. Now, this whole theory is contradicted and exploded by the position, *that Jesus is Christ*. This position, *in terminis*, denies the distinction which the Cerinthians made between them, and it

plainly *implies* that there never was a time when Jesus existed, and was not Christ, which is in direct opposition to what we know the Cerinthians held upon this point. Now John, in the next chapter of his epistle, the fifth, at the beginning lays down this position, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." We have, indeed, similar statements to this in the book of the Acts, in the recorded preaching of the apostles. They laboured to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ; and the meaning of this manifestly is just this, that Jesus was the Messiah promised to the fathers and predicted by the prophets. But when we know, that before John wrote this epistle, men had arisen who were disturbing the purity and peace of the church by making a distinction or separation between Jesus and Christ; when we see that, in the context, John is warning the churches against another branch of the heresy *concerning Christ's person;* and when we know that this heresy, which consisted substantially in a denial that Jesus is Christ, not only existed in John's time, but continued to infest the church for several succeeding generations, we can scarcely refuse to admit that the statement is to be taken here in a more limited and specific sense than that in which it is employed in the book of the Acts, and was intended to be, what it really is, a denial of the heresy of Cerinthus; and moreover, by plain implication, an assertion of the vital or fundamental importance of right views of the person of Christ, as intimately connected with those radical changes of character which bear so directly upon the salvation of men's souls.

I have no doubt that it has been often proved that the introduction of John's gospel is an exposure of the heresies of the Docetæ and the Cerinthians, of those who even at that time denied His incarnation and real humanity, and of those who, while admitting that Christ came down from heaven and was in some sense divine, separated Jesus from Christ,—held that Christ left Jesus before His final sufferings, and, of course, denied anything like the permanent union of the divine and human natures in His one person. But it would be to go out of our way to enter at any length into the illustration of this subject. I have made these observations, not so much for the purpose of explaining those portions of the New Testament which refer to the early heresies,—for I have merely glanced, and very hurriedly, at a few of them,—but rather for the purpose of showing that a knowledge of the ancient here-

sies is not so entirely destitute of all direct utility as at first sight it might appear to be; and that it has some bearing, though neither very extensive nor very influential, upon the great object of opening up the true and exact meaning of some portions of the word of God.

In asserting the comparative unimportance of a knowledge of the early heresies, I must be understood as referring rather to the detailed exposition of the particular views of individuals as formal categorical doctrines, than to the leading effects and results of the Gnostic system as a whole, or in its main features; for though the historical questions as to what were the precise doctrines held by this heretic and by the other in the first or second century, are not of much importance in themselves, besides being often involved in considerable doubt or uncertainty, I have no doubt that the Gnostic system did exert a considerable influence upon the views and condition of the church in early times, especially in regard to two points,—viz., first, the Trinity and the person of Christ; and secondly, what has been called the ascetic institute or discipline, as including celibacy and monasticism, which soon began to prevail so widely in the church, and which exerted so injurious an influence. The earliest heretics upon the subject of the Trinity and the person of Christ were deeply involved in the principles of the Gnostic system; and even those who maintained sound and orthodox views upon these points, in opposition to the heretics, especially in the third century, gave many indications that they were too much entangled in rash and presumptuous speculations about matters connected with the Divine nature, above the comprehension of the human faculties, and not clearly revealed in Scripture. The great body of the church, indeed, preserved in the main a scriptural orthodoxy upon these important questions; and when, in the fourth and fifth centuries, they came to be fully discussed and decided on in the councils of the church, the creeds and decrees adopted were, on the whole, so accordant with Scripture, as to have secured the general concurrence of subsequent generations.

It was not so, however, with the ascetic institute. Upon this subject the leaven of the Gnostic system seems to have insinuated itself into the great body of the church itself, even when its formal doctrines were openly condemned; and to have gradually

succeeded in exerting a most injurious influence upon the general tone of sentiment and practice. The indirect influence of the Gnostic system, absurd and ridiculous as that system was in its more formal and specific doctrines, has been developed with great ingenuity and sagacity, and in a very impressive way, in Mr Isaac Taylor's very valuable and interesting work entitled "Ancient Christianity," written in opposition to Tractarianism,—a work which, though it contains some rather strong and extreme views, naturally enough arising from the zealous prosecution of one important object, ought to be carefully studied by all who wish to understand the true condition of the church, both in regard to doctrine and practice in that period—viz., the latter half of the fourth and the first half of the fifth centuries—which has been held up by the Tractarians as the great model according to which the church should now be regulated.* Celibacy and monasticism were the cases in which Gnostic principles were most clearly and fully developed among those who adhered to the church; but those who are curious in tracing the progress and connection of doctrines profess to discover traces of its operation in other views and notions that prevailed in early times, and were afterwards fully developed in Popery.

Gnosticism, viewed as a general description of a system, and abstracted from the special absurdities and extravagances which particular individuals mixed up with it, is regarded by many, and apparently with justice, as being traceable to a sort of combination of the Oriental theosophy, the Jewish cabbala, and the Platonic philosophy. And in the course of the second century, and still more in the third, we see traces, on the one hand, of this system of philosophical speculation being modified by the influences of the Christian revelation and its contents; and, on the other hand, of the views that prevailed in the church among those who professed a greater respect for the sacred Scriptures being more and more influenced by the prevailing philosophy. The result was the formation of a class of men in regard to whom it remains to this day a subject for controversial discussion, whether or not they were Christians in any sense,—a question which, in the same sense, might be discussed in regard to many modern philosophers. The question practically assumes this form: Did they, or did they not,

* Ancient Christianity, vol. i., p. 145, *et seq.*

admit the authority of the Christian revelation as the ultimate standard in regard to every subject to which its statements apply? Now, there have been many, both in ancient and in modern times, calling themselves philosophers, who would not have liked to have given a categorical answer to this question, but whose conduct in prosecuting their speculations practically answered it in the negative. It is to be regarded as a mere difference in degree, and as not essentially affecting the rectitude of the relation in which men stood to God's revelation,—whether, first, they openly denied its authority; or, secondly, got rid of, or explained away its statements by processes which are manifestly unfair, and which practically render it of no real utility; or, thirdly, just left it out of view altogether, and carried on their speculations about God, and man's relation to Him, and his duties and destiny, without any reference to what the word of God teaches,—without giving any opinion, or committing themselves upon the subject, of the authority of Scripture.

Each of these three modes of casting off the controlling authority of God's word, and leaving full scope for indulging in their own theories and speculations,—*i.e.*, bringing all subjects, even the highest and most exalted, to be tried by the standard of their own understandings or feelings, their fancies and inclinations, —has prevailed at different times, and in different countries, according to diversities of circumstances and influences. The second mode, which consists substantially in arbitrarily rejecting some parts of Scripture, and in explaining away and perverting the rest, prevailed very generally in the early times of the church; and it has prevailed largely in the past and present generations. It was generally adopted by the Gnostics of the second and third, and by the Manichæans of the third and fourth, centuries. Origen, though remaining connected with the church, came very near to it; and it is just that which has been followed by modern rationalists and neologians upon the Continent. Mosheim* gives the following description of the way in which the Gnostics and Manichæans dealt with the books of Scripture,—and it is impossible to read it without being struck with the remarkable and thorough

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* Commentarii, pp. 748–9. *Vide* Neander, vol. ii., p. 163 of Rose's translation, and pp. 225–6 of Torrey's. Norton's Evidence of the Genuineness of the Gospels, vol. iii., pp. 183–213; Part III., c. x.: "Of the manner in which the Gnostics reconciled their doctrines with Christianity." 1st Ed.

similarity of their views and conduct in this matter to those of modern German rationalists:—"Non negabant quidem in plerisque Novi Testamenti libris quædam esse divina et a Christo, ejusque apostolis profecta: verum his intertexta esse plurima falsa contendebant et prorsus impia: ex quo cogebant, ea tantum in libris N. T. fide digna esse, quæ Manichæi, magistri sui, . . . sententiis congruerent . . . Interdum enim dare videntur, immo dant, divinæ originis hæc esse Evangelia: sed quod dant, statim ipsi tollunt et evertunt. Addunt enim, ea misere a dolosis et mendacibus viris corrupta, interpolata, Judaicis fabulis aucta et amplificata esse. Ex quo sequitur; ea, uti nunc sese habent, nullius esse pretii et utilitatis. . . . Aliis vero locis negant disertissime, ea Christi Apostolos auctores habere aut vel a Christo vel ab Apostolis, quorum nomina præ se ferunt, scripta esse: contra pugnant auctores eorum homines fuisse semi-Judæos, credulos, mendaces."*

*"They did not deny that in most of the books of the New Testament there were some things that were divine, and that came from Christ and His apostles; but they contended that there were mixed up with these many things that were false and impious; whence they inferred that those things only in the N. T. were worthy of credit which agreed with the opinions of their master Manichæus;" and again, "Sometimes they seem to grant, nay, they do grant, that these gospels are of divine origin; but what they grant they immediately again withdraw and overturn. For they add that they have been miserably corrupted and interpolated by deceitful and mendacious men, and stuffed with Jewish fables; whence it follows that, as we now have them, they are of no value or utility... But in other passages they expressly deny that these books have the apostles of Christ for their authors, or that they were written either by Christ or by the apostles whose names they bear; and, on the contrary, maintain that their authors were half Jews, credulous and deceitful."

Neander gives a similar account of their principles and conduct in this respect:—"In respect to the views of the Manichæans with regard to the *sources of religious knowledge*, they considered the revelations of the Paraclete, or Mani, as the highest and only infallible authority, whereby everything was to be judged. They went on the principle, that Mani's doctrine embraced the absolute truths which enlighten the reason;—whatever did not accord with them was contrary to reason, wherever it might be found. They received in part, it is true, the Scriptures of the New Testament. But judging them by that standard principle which we have mentioned, they indulged in the most arbitrary criticism in applying them to points of doctrine or ethics. Sometimes they asserted that the original records of the religion had been falsified by various corruptions of the prince of darkness (tares among the wheat); sometimes, that Jesus and His apostles had accommodated themselves to existing Jewish opinions, with a view to prepare men gradually for the reception of the pure truth; sometimes, that the apostles themselves, when they first appeared in the character of teachers, were entangled in various Jewish errors. Hence they concluded that it was first by the teachings of the Paraclete, men were enabled to distinguish the true from the false matter in the New Testament."—Torrey's translation, vol. ii., pp. 225–6.

This is a most accurate full-length portrait of modern German rationalism, from the Manichæans of the fourth and fifth centuries.

The contemplation of the heresies of the early ages, viewed in connection with the heresies of modern times, is well fitted to remind us of the paramount necessity of our settling clearly and definitively, as the most important of all questions, whether God has really given us a positive supernatural revelation of His will; if so, where, or in what book, that revelation is to be found, and whether it was really intended to be understood by men in general through the ordinary natural processes of interpretation, and is fitted to be a standard of faith and practice; and after having settled this, and made our minds familiar with the grounds on which our judgment on these points rests, of making a constant, honest, and unshrinking application, to *every* subject of thought and practice, of the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

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* Consult Ittigius, Buddæus, Lardner, Mosheim, Burton, Neander.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FATHERS OF THE SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES.

Having adverted to the writings of the apostolical fathers, and endeavoured to estimate their real value and importance, especially in so far as concerns the interpretation of Scripture, and the correct exposition of the scheme of divine truth; and having also attempted to explain the application, and to estimate the value of a knowledge of the heresies of the early ages, I propose to give a brief survey of the principal writers of the second and third centuries, chiefly for the purpose of adverting to the influence they exerted, and the measure of practical importance that may still attach to their writings. For this purpose, I intend to collect together, in one view, those facts connected with the principal fathers of these two centuries, however otherwise simple, and however well known, which it seems to me most important to remember, and which are best fitted to furnish an antidote to some of the notions upon this subject which are zealously advocated in the present day.

Sec. I.—*Justin Martyr.*

The first writer whose works have come down to us, and who had not lived in the time of the apostles or conversed with them, is Justin, who flourished about the middle of the second century, and who, as well as Polycarp, suffered martyrdom in the persecution under M. Aurelius Antoninus, the philosopher, soon after the year 160; and is commonly called Justin Martyr. Various considerations invest Justin as a writer with peculiar interest and importance in the history of the early church. He is the earliest author who has written much that has come down to us, and the first who wrote defences of Christianity against the attacks of Jews and infidels, his defences being the models of the early

apologies, even of Tertullian's, down till Origen's. He is the earliest Christian author of whom we have any remains still extant, that was versant in Pagan literature and philosophy before his conversion to Christianity; and finally, the modern Socinians have assigned to him the honour of inventing, with the assistance of Plato the Greek and Philo the Jew, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and of a trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead. All these various considerations contribute to invest the writings of Justin with no ordinary importance in the history of the early church. There is no reason to doubt that Justin was a genuine convert to the faith of Christ: that he was not merely convinced intellectually of the divine origin of Christianity, but that he had been enabled to believe to the saving of his soul, and, of course, had been born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth.

In regard to Justin,* as in regard to most of the fathers, there are some preliminary questions to be settled as to the genuineness of the works commonly ascribed to him; and these questions are often attended with extreme difficulty. It is certain that several works which Justin wrote have perished; and of the pieces extant, which have been commonly ascribed to him, and are usually found in the editions of his works, the substance of what seems to approach nearest to truth and certainty is this—that the two Apologies for Christianity, the one written most probably about the year 140, and the other about the year 160; the Dialogue with Trypho the Jew; the Exhortation to the Greeks; and the fragment of a work upon the Resurrection, are genuine, and that the rest are spurious. There is nothing in the writings of Justin, any more than in those of the apostolical fathers, to give the least countenance to the exalted notions that have sometimes been propounded regarding the authority of the fathers upon exegetical or theological subjects. He does not *profess* to communicate to us any information that had been derived from the apostles in addition to what has been conveyed to us through the channel of the sacred Scriptures. He is assuredly no safe guide to follow in the interpretation of Scripture; for nothing can be more certain than that, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, in which he discusses fully the argument from prophecy for the Messiahship of Jesus, he has given many interpretations and appli-

* Euseb., Lib. iv., c. 18.

cations of Scripture, and especially of the Old Testament, that are erroneous and ridiculous. He forms, as indeed almost every one of the fathers of the first three centuries does, an important link in the chain of evidence, by which we prove the genuineness and integrity of the books of Scripture, though it is remarkable that he never quotes any of the epistles of Paul, probably to avoid giving offence to the Jews, for whose conversion, being himself a native of Palestine though born of Greek parents, he chiefly laboured, and who were strongly prejudiced against the apostle of the Gentiles.

Justin has been often accused, even by others than Socinians, of corrupting the simplicity of the gospel scheme of doctrine by mere philosophical speculations, derived especially from the works of Plato and his followers. The accusation is certainly not altogether destitute of foundation, though it has been often very much exaggerated. Justin unequivocally professes to hold what we would now call the perfection and sufficiency of the Scriptures as the only rule of faith. He professed to take them as his own rule in the formation of his opinions. He no doubt honestly intended to apply this principle in practice; and in the main he succeeded, though it cannot be denied that in some points he was led astray by his respect for the works of the ancient philosophers. He indulges in some rash and unwarranted speculations about angels. He is the author, so far as we have any means of knowing, of the very absurd interpretation, which was adopted generally by the fathers of the first three centuries, of Gen. vi. 4, and which represents the sons of God who went in to the daughters of men as angels, and their progeny as demons, who became the gods of the pagans. The errors of Justin, however, which probably exerted the most injurious influence, and were, perhaps, the clearest indications of a declension from the purity of scriptural theology, through the influence of false philosophy, were the assertion of the Christianity of the more respectable pagans who lived before Christ, and of the independent freedom of the human will—the *αὐτεξούσιον*. Justin was accustomed to say that Socrates and Plato, and such men, were Christians, and were saved; but it is difficult to discern exactly what were the grounds on which he maintained this position, or what he held to be involved in it. It is certain that he thought that Plato and some other ancient philosophers had had access to the Jewish Scriptures, and derived

some of their views from that source. He does not seem to have gone nearly so far as to maintain that men could be saved by following the light of nature, and the dictates of their own religion, whatever it might be. He had some obscure notion of these men having in some way or other acquired some knowledge of Christ; and perhaps all that we can very explicitly charge against him on this head is an unwillingness to submit absolutely to the teaching of Scripture, to be contented with what God has been pleased to reveal as to the general rules that ordinarily regulate His procedure, and to leave everything else connected with the ultimate destiny of men in the hands of their righteous Judge. It is right that we should give all men all due credit for any valuable or useful qualities which they may have possessed, or for any services which in any department they have rendered to their fellow-men; but when we speak of their relation to God, and of their eternal destiny, we must take care that our views be regulated by God's own revealed will, and not by merely personal feelings or worldly influences; and that we do not under-estimate the importance and necessity, in its bearing upon men's eternal welfare, of *that* knowledge of Himself, of His character, and His plans, which He has been pleased to communicate to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The other error about free will seems more serious; but it is not very easy to say what were the precise views of Justin regarding it. It appears chiefly in exposing the fatalism of some of the Gnostic sects, and in defending the doctrine that God had foretold the future good and bad actions of men, from the charge of overthrowing men's responsibility. And although, in defending what all admit to be in substance true upon these points, he makes some statements about the freedom of the will and the grounds of human responsibility, which, when viewed in the light of modern controversies, Calvinists generally would disapprove of, it is not very certain that he had deliberately adopted any view that was fundamentally erroneous upon these difficult subjects. On the contrary, there is good reason to believe that he continued to hold in substance the scheme of doctrine clearly taught in the writings of the apostles, and universally assumed or asserted in those of the apostolical fathers; though it is not to be denied that, both in regard to this subject of free will, and in regard to the superior sanctity of a life of celibacy, we find in him some traces of that

deviation from scriptural soundness which continued from this time to increase and extend, and exerted subsequently so injurious an influence both on the doctrine and practice of religion. And, of course, the early occurrence of such errors is fitted to show us, that there are no uninspired men, however ancient, however favourable their position may have been, and however deserving they may be of respect and esteem, whom we should follow as guides or oracles.

One of the most interesting and important passages in the works of Justin, is that in which he gives a somewhat detailed account of the ordinary mode of conducting the public worship of the church in his time; an account which proves the non-existence of a liturgy at that period, and presents a picture of Christian worship very different in its simplicity from that which has been usually exhibited by Popish and Prelatic churches.

In regard to the doctrine of the Trinity and the person of Christ, it has been proved that Justin, though, in common with almost all the fathers who flourished before the great Arian controversy in the fourth century, he has made use of some expressions which are very liable to be misunderstood, and stand in need of a favourable interpretation, held in substance the common orthodox doctrine upon this subject; and that he held it upon the authority of Scripture, as a doctrine revealed by God in His word, though he has introduced some Platonic phraseology, and indulged in some unwarranted speculations in trying to explain and illustrate it. Satisfactory evidence has also been produced from the works of Justin, to prove that the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was known and generally received in the church before he undertook the defence of Christianity, and that this fact was well known to the pagans, who were accustomed to adduce it as a charge against Christians, that they believed that a man who had been crucified was God.*

I may mention, before leaving Justin, as a specimen of the difficulty of understanding precisely what was the doctrine of the fathers, and the real import of their statements, that near the end of his first apology there is a short passage about the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper, which the Papists have adduced as a proof that

* *Vide* Wilson's Illustration of the method of explaining the New Testament by the early opinions of Jews and Christians concerning Christ, c. xxii., p. 351, and c. xxiii., p. 372.

he held the doctrine of transubstantiation,—the Lutherans, as a proof that he held the doctrine of consubstantiation,—and the generality of Protestants, as a proof that he held neither the one nor the other. An examination of the passage is sufficient, I think, to prove that there is room for an honest difference of opinion as to what Justin's doctrine upon the point really was; and that it is not very easy to say precisely what he held regarding it. There is no difficulty, indeed, in establishing, notwithstanding the obscurity of this passage, the general position, that neither transubstantiation nor consubstantiation was known in the church till long after Justin's time; but the passage certainly affords evidence of what is unquestionably true, viz., that the fathers began very early to talk about the subject of the sacraments in an exalted, mysterious, and unintelligible style, which was very far removed from the simplicity of Scripture, and which issued at length in that monstrous system of absurd and impious extravagance in regard to these ordinances which soon overspread the church, which contributed so largely to the destruction of true religion, and which is still exerting in many quarters its baneful influence.*

Sec. II.—*Irenæus.*

Irenæus is the next author of eminence whose works have come down to us. He was a disciple of Polycarp, came from the East, settled in France, and became Bishop of Lyons; for in his time there was some distinction between bishops and presbyters, though it was very unlike the modern one, and though he continues, as I formerly had occasion to mention, to use the words in a great measure indiscriminately. He lived till the very end of the second or the beginning of the third century. We have already had occasion to mention that his principal work, which has come down to us, is a full account and confutation of the heresies that had been broached since the introduction of Christianity; and its real value must in a great measure depend upon the importance of acquiring a knowledge of these heresies—a topic which we have already endeavoured to explain. In confuting these heresies, how-

* Sculteti Medulla Theologiæ Patrum, P. i., pp. 55-6. Ittigius, Hist. Eccles., sæc. ii., c. iii., sec. iv., p. 210. Semisch on Justin, vol. ii., p. 339. On Justin generally, Semisch, Biblical Cabinet, vols. xli. and xlii., and Bp. Kaye's account of the writings and opinions of Justin Martyr.

ever, Irenæus has made a most abundant use of Scripture; and indeed it has been calculated, that he has quoted or referred to about nine hundred texts, and his work thus forms an important link in the chain of evidence for the authenticity and integrity of the canonical books. It is true, however, of him, as of the rest, that his writings afford us very little assistance in ascertaining and establishing the true meaning of any portion of Scripture, except, as formerly explained, indirectly, through the information they afford as to the precise nature of the heresies to which the apostles referred; and that they contain abundant proof that he could not by any means be safely followed as an expositor of Scripture. Although there are no plausible grounds for charging Irenæus with being led into error by a love of philosophical speculation, or by a predilection for heathen literature, as has been alleged in regard to Justin Martyr; and although there is no reason to doubt that he was a man of true piety, yet he seems to have deviated farther from scriptural doctrine, and to have embraced a larger number of erroneous opinions than Justin did; thus illustrating the almost regularly progressive corruption of the church. He was, like Justin, a believer in the doctrine of the Trinity, though, like him too, he has made some statements which have afforded a handle to the Arians. He has, more explicitly than Justin, asserted the doctrine of free will (*αὐτεξούσιον*), in what would now be called an Arminian or Pelagian sense; while he has also very explicitly contradicted himself upon this subject—*i.e.*, he has laid down scriptural or evangelical principles which oppose it—thus apparently indicating that the great principles of evangelical truth which the inspired apostles taught, were still generally retained in the church, though they were beginning to be somewhat obscured and corrupted; and that the corruption was coming in at that point, or in connection with that topic, which has usually furnished one of the most ready and plausible handles to men whose perception of divine things was weak and feeble, and who have, in consequence, been the great corrupters of scriptural doctrine—viz., the alleged natural power of man, as he is, to do the will of God. Irenæus, like Justin, indulged in some unwarranted speculations about angels, and the state of the souls of men after death; and he has put forth some unintelligible absurdities in the way of comparing Eve, the mother of us all, with Mary, the mother of our Lord, which have afforded to Papists a plausible ground for

alleging that he ascribed to Mary a share in the salvation of sinners, and in consequence thought her entitled to a measure of honour and worship which the Scripture certainly does not sanction.

Irenæus cannot be said, any more than any of the fathers who preceded him, to have conveyed to us any valuable information as to what the apostles taught or ordained, in addition to what is taught or ordained in the canonical Scriptures. He does indeed *profess*, upon several occasions, to communicate to us some information which he had received by oral tradition from the apostles; but it so happens providentially, that in the instances in which he does this most explicitly and most confidently, he alleges in one case what clearly *contradicts* Scripture, and in another what is too absurd to be believed upon almost any testimony. Some Gnostics had asserted that Christ's public ministry lasted only one year. Irenæus is answering this, and after adducing many foolish reasons to prove *à priori* that Christ must have lived longer on earth than thirty years,—such as that He came to save men of all ages, and must therefore have passed through old age as well as childhood,—distinctly avers * that Christ lived on earth till He was nearly fifty years of age, and refers, in proof of this, first to the gospel, and then to the testimony of all the elders who conversed with John, the disciple of our Lord,—and who declared that John told them this; and he adds, that these men had not only seen John, but also others of the apostles, who had told them the same thing. Notwithstanding this somewhat imposing array of hearsay evidence, I am not aware that any of the more respectable worshippers of tradition has adopted Irenæus' opinion as to the duration of our Saviour's sojourn on earth, which the gospel history so clearly refutes.

In the other case, he gives a very childish and ridiculous description of the abundance of luxuries, and of the fertility of the soil, especially in producing grapes and wine, to be enjoyed in the days of the millennium,—a description which he alleges had been handed down from the mouth of our Lord Himself. Of course no one now believes that our Lord or His apostles ever said what Irenæus ascribed to them on this subject; yet he evidently believed that they did. Irenæus was a man quite equal

* Lib. ii., c. 22.

to the generality of the fathers of the first three centuries in point of good principle and good sense; and these facts therefore show, not only how little reliance is to be placed upon any allegations of theirs as to the transmission of doctrines or appointments of the apostles by oral tradition, but also more generally, how unsafe and uncertain a medium of transmission oral tradition is.

The same lesson is taught us very clearly and impressively by the circumstances connected with a discussion which broke out more than once in the course of the second century, in which Irenæus was concerned, and which may be said to have been the first controversy which agitated the church. I refer to the well-known dispute as to the day on which Easter should be kept, in which, on both sides, there was an appeal to the authority of the apostles conveyed by tradition. We find in the book of the Acts plain proofs that the apostles, and the Jewish converts generally, along with other Jewish rites, observed the passover, which is translated (Acts xii. 4) unfairly Easter. The keeping of the passover as such, does not seem to have continued after the destruction of Jerusalem, except by the Judaizing sects, the Ebionites and the Nazarenes; but instead of it, or as a sort of substitute for it, there seems to have been gradually introduced the practice of commemorating the event of the institution of the Lord's Supper,—the original institution of this ordinance being identical in point of time with our Lord's last observance of the passover, and the ordinance itself having, in the Christian church, a place and a purpose analogous to those of the passover in the Jewish church. This again seems to have led to the commemoration of our Saviour's resurrection, the great direct subject of the apostolic testimony; and then the commemoration of the institution of the Lord's Supper, identical in point of time with the Jewish passover, in the keeping of which the whole of these days of commemoration manifestly originated, seems to have been transferred to the day of His death, which was still regarded as the passover. It has always been, and indeed still is, a subject of controversial discussion, whether the day on which our Saviour kept the passover and instituted the Lord's Supper, or the following day, on which He was crucified, was the right legal day for observing the passover on that occasion; in other words, whether the Thursday or the Friday of that week was the 14th day of the first month. Many have contended that our Lord, on

that occasion, anticipated by one day the ordinary time for observing it; and that the Friday, the day of His crucifixion, was that on which, according to the law, it ought to have been observed.

At any rate, the 14th of the first month was that on which, in the primitive church, first the Jewish passover as such, then, as coming in its place, the commemoration of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and afterwards the commemoration of His death, was celebrated; and then, of course, the anniversary of His resurrection would fall to be celebrated on the third day thereafter. We find that, about the middle of the second century, a difference obtained in the practice of different churches as to the day on which the commemoration of the resurrection should be celebrated, and that a dispute arose concerning it. From the very imperfect notices which we have of this affair, there is some difficulty in determining precisely what were the points involved in the discussion; and Mosheim has investigated this topic very fully and minutely.*

But the main point of dispute was this, whether the anniversary of our Saviour's death and resurrection should be celebrated upon the 14th day of the first month, and the third day thereafter respectively, on whatever day of the *week* these might fall, —or should be celebrated upon the Friday and the following Lord's day, whatever day of the *month* they might fall upon. The churches in Asia generally adopted the former rule, and the churches of the West the latter. Thus stood matters about the middle of the second century, when some discussion arose concerning the accuracy of the different practices. About that time, Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, came to Rome and discussed the matter with Anicetus, bishop of that city. It could scarcely be alleged that there was anything in Scripture to warrant the observance of such anniversary days in the Christian church, or to determine the time of their observance; and the appeal accordingly was to the alleged *practice* of the apostles,—the Asiatics claiming in support of their rule the practice of the apostles John and Philip, and the Western churches that of Peter and Paul. Polycarp and Anicetus could not come to an agreement upon the question; but as there was still a large measure of brotherly love and forbearance among the churches, and no

* Commentarii, p. 435, *et seq.*

such sense as afterwards obtained of the importance and necessity of perfect uniformity in all outward rites and ceremonies; and as Anicetus, though Bishop of Rome, had no more idea that he was entitled to rule the universal church than Peter had that this prerogative was vested in him, they separated on friendly terms after uniting together in celebrating the Lord's Supper, at which Polycarp presided.

The diversity of practice continued, and about the end of the century gave rise to another dispute, involving the same principles and the same appeals to apostolic practice, but conducted with greater vehemence. Victor, Bishop of Rome, seems to have insisted upon the Eastern churches changing their practice, and agreeing to commemorate Christ's resurrection upon the Lord's day, on whatever day of the month it might fall; and, of course, regulating the keeping of any other days observed about that season of the year by the fixing of what was afterwards called Easter Sunday instead of the 14th day of the month. The Asiatic churches disregarded his interference; and Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, wrote a letter to him in their name, part of which is preserved in Eusebius,* in which, after appealing to the practice of the apostles John and Philip, and of the bishops who had succeeded them, he bases their refusal to adopt the Western practice upon no less sacred a principle than the duty of obeying God rather than men. Victor, who seems to have exhibited in embryo the spirit of pride and usurpation which ultimately produced the full-blown Papacy,—though he did not venture to put forth a claim to supremacy over the church,—issued, in consequence, a sentence of excommunication against the Eastern churches; and here it was that Irenæus became connected with the controversy. Though an Asiatic by birth, and a disciple of Polycarp, he agreed with the Western church, in which he was now settled, about the celebration of Easter; but he wholly disapproved of the arbitrary and insolent conduct of Victor, and addressed to him a letter of earnest remonstrance upon the subject, which is also preserved,† and is one of the most interesting documents that have come down to us bearing upon the history of the second century. It is from this letter that we learn of Polycarp's visit to Rome, and of the fraternal intercourse between him and

* Lib. v., c. 24.

† Lib. v., c. 24.

Anicetus notwithstanding their difference of opinion and practice upon the subject; and the principle object of the letter is to urge Victor to follow the example of forbearance upon this point which his predecessors had set him. As it is certain that Victor's sentence of excommunication was wholly disregarded by the Asiatic churches and by the church in general,—as it was never cancelled,—and as yet the ecclesiastical standing of the Asiatic bishops and their successors was not in the least affected by it,—some Roman Catholic writers, seeing the inauspicious bearing of this fact upon the allegation that the Bishops of Rome have always been recognised as the vicars of Christ and the sources and centres of catholic unity, have maintained that Victor merely *threatened* to excommunicate the Eastern churches, but did not carry his threat into execution.

This question is not altogether free from difficulty, and there are both Protestant and Popish writers who have defended the opposite sides. Bellarmine assumes it as incontrovertible, that Victor excommunicated the Asiatic churches, and adduces it as a proof of the then recognised right of the Bishop of Rome to exercise supremacy over the whole church; and the same use had been previously made of it by Pope Nicholas I., who flourished in the ninth century, and dealt largely in excommunications. But later Popish controversialists, shrinking from the difficulty of having no evidence to produce that the supposed sentence of excommunication was either regarded as valid at the time, or was cancelled afterwards, have thought it more expedient, even with the necessity of throwing Pope Nicholas overboard, to maintain, as is done boldly and learnedly by Natalis Alexander, that Victor merely threatened to excommunicate, but did not issue the sentence. Protestants have no temptation to deal unfairly by the historical evidence upon this point; for, whether the sentence of excommunication was issued or not, the history of this whole matter affords abundant proof that the idea that the Bishop of Rome was the vicar of Christ, or that it was necessary to be in communion with him in order to be in communion with the catholic church, was then wholly unknown. But I have no doubt that there is quite sufficient evidence in statements upon the subject found in Eusebius, Socrates, Nicephorus, and Epiphanius,* that Victor did

* *Vide* La Placette, p. 88.

excommunicate the Asiatic churches, while the only evidence on the other side is the notorious fact, that the sentence was entirely disregarded, and did not take effect; and for a Romanist to found on this as a proof that the excommunication was never issued, is of course a mere *petitio principii.**

The bearing of these proceedings and discussions connected with the time of celebrating Easter, occurring as they did soon after the middle, and again near the end of the second century, upon the questions of the reliance that may be placed upon alleged apostolical traditions not recorded in Scripture, and the recognition and exercise of the alleged supremacy of the Pope, is too obvious to need to be pointed out; and it gives to them an importance in the history of the church that bears no proportion to the intrinsic importance of the subject, in itself very insignificant, to which they referred. We are to regard the work, and to notice the design, of God in this, as in all the dispensations of His providence; and we cannot but view these transactions as a great beacon erected near the commencement of the church's history, to warn men, first, that no reliance is to be placed upon any pretended apostolical traditions, unless they are contained in the canonical Scriptures; and, secondly, that the Bishops of Rome are neither qualified nor entitled to govern the church of Christ. The warning on *both* points was disregarded; and the consequence was, that the great body of the professing church ultimately made *almost* entire shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, and became involved in thick darkness and deep degradation.

Sec. III.—*Clemens Alexandrinus.*

We have seen, in considering Justin Martyr and Irenæus, that even in the second century there was, besides much very inaccurate interpretation of particular passages of Scripture, some tendency manifested to deviate from the simplicity of scriptural doctrine as taught by the apostles, though not yet carried out to any considerable extent. Since there is as much of this tendency

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* *Vide* Bellarminus, de Rom. Pont., Lib. ii., c. 19; Mornayi Mysterium Iniquitatis, p. 16, *et seq.*; Heideggeri Historia Papatus, Period. I., sec. xiv.; Dupin, de Antiquâ Ecclesiæ Disciplinâ, p. 145; and especially La Placette, Observationes Historico Ecclesiasticæ, P. ii., Obs. i., pp. 83-102; Ittigius, H. E., sæc. ii., c. ii., pp. 78-89; Nat. Alexander, sæc. ii., Diss. v., Art. v.

manifested by Irenæus, who was no philosopher, as by Justin, who was well acquainted with the literature and philosophy of paganism, we cannot trace the incipient corruption of doctrine wholly at least to the influence of philosophical speculation, or indeed to any one specific cause, except what is in some sense the proximate cause of all error and heresy,—viz., the want of due subjection to the authority of God's word, and of due diligence and impartiality in the use of the right means of attaining to a correct knowledge of its meaning.

It was at Alexandria, and through the labours and writings of Clemens Alexandrinus, and of Origen, who successively presided over the catechetical school of that city, that the progress of corruption in the interpretation of Scripture, and in the exposition of the scheme of divine truth, was most extensively promoted through the influence of false philosophy. Alexandria was at this period perhaps the most celebrated school of philosophy in the world; and in consequence of the attention there generally given to philosophical pursuits, and the great number of men of cultivated minds and speculative habits, it seems to have been thought proper, even at an early period in the history of the church, to seek to provide for young men instruction in the doctrines of Christianity of a higher kind,—*i.e.*, of a more literary and philosophical description than was usually furnished in other places;—though there is no sufficient ground for the tradition that the school was established by Mark the Evangelist. In adopting and carrying out this general idea, there was nothing that could be reasonably objected to. There is certainly no reason why Christians should not be just as well acquainted with literature and philosophy, according to their means and circumstances, as the generality of those around them; and there is no reason why their literary and philosophical knowledge should not exert some influence upon the way in which they expound and defend the truths of revelation. The danger arises only from giving to philosophy a place and influence to which it has no well-founded claim, and especially from employing it in such a way as implies, or leads to, a casting down of the word of God from the place of authority, which it ought ever to occupy.* Men who are familiar with philosophical discussions, and who can speculate

* *Vide* Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Rel., vol. ii., pp. 195–234, and pp. 372–416, Rose's translation; Gieseler, vol. i., pp. 134–146, Cunningham's translation.

upon many topics connected with God, and man's duty and destiny, are very apt to think that they have a means of acquiring certain knowledge of these subjects, which is not open to mere readers of the Bible; they are very apt to over-estimate their privileges in this respect, to imagine that they do not need to restrict themselves to the constant application of the same standard as ordinary men; and at length they too often come to place their own speculations in the position of modifying at least, if not superseding, the informations of Scripture. This was what took place at Alexandria in the course of the third century; and this is what, under a variety of aspects, has been exhibited more or less extensively at all times when practical religion was low, and when literature and philosophy were flourishing. Christianity certainly does not discourage men from bringing all the powers of their minds to bear upon what may be called a philosophical examination of all the objects that come under their cognizance, including equally the material universe, and human beings, individually and collectively. The evils which literature and science may have inflicted upon the cause of true religion are to be prevented or cured, not by prohibiting and abandoning literary and philosophical pursuits, but by keeping them in their proper place, and especially by steadily and faithfully applying the great truths that the Bible is the word of God; that all that it contains is true; that it is the only source whence full and *certain* knowledge concerning God, concerning man's relation to his Maker, and his duty and destiny, can be derived. So long as these truths are held and *faithfully acted upon*, literature and philosophy will do no harm to religion; and if it be alleged that an addiction to philosophical pursuits has a *tendency* to prejudice men against these truths, or to prevent them from fully following them out, even when they professedly admit them, we must deny that this tendency is inherent, and still more, that it is irresistible, and maintain that the temptation (for it is nothing more) may be, and should be, guarded against.

The evils to which we have referred were extensively manifested in the school of Alexandria; and Clement and Origen proved great corrupters of the word of God, and of the system of divine truth, and did permanent and extensive injury to the church of Christ. They themselves imbibed largely the principles of the eclectic or neo-Platonic philosophy,—a combination of the doctrines

of Plato with the Oriental theosophy, as it is commonly called; *i.e.*, in other words, they adopted on philosophical grounds views upon many points inconsistent with the doctrines of Scripture, and then sought to accommodate the Scriptures to their preconceived opinions, in place of seeking honestly and impartially for the true meaning of Scripture, and regulating their whole system by that standard. The great problem which the more respectable of the ancient philosophers proposed to themselves was, to show how human nature might be improved and brought to a state of perfection; and this they often did in the way of explaining how a perfect man—a good and wise man—might be formed. Clement took up this idea, and followed it out in its different stages or departments, in the three principal works of his which have come down to our times. He displays, undoubtedly, in these works, a good deal of talent and extensive learning. He has, indeed, presented to us some interesting information upon topics connected with the literature and philosophy of heathen antiquity, which is not now to be learned from any other source; though it may be said with truth that he manifests fully as accurate an acquaintance with profane as with sacred literature. His first work is addressed to the heathen, and is called "Λογος Προτρεπτικος,"—a hortatory address; and, being directed to the object of showing that, in order to men being truly wise and good, they must renounce heathenism and embrace Christianity, and that there are quite sufficient grounds why they should do so, it partakes very much of the general character of the apologies written by some of the other fathers of the second or third centuries. Its principal peculiarity is that, while exposing fully and eloquently the heathen mythology and religious worship, it is occupied to some extent in adducing the testimonies of heathen philosophers in favour of some of the great principles of natural religion, which are also embodied in the Christian revelation.* This was very natural in Clement's situation, called as he was to recommend Christianity to men of education, who were versant in the literature and philosophy of heathen antiquity; and there was nothing in itself objectionable about it. There is certainly nothing wrong in noticing the testimonies of ancient philosophers or legislators, so far as they go, in favour of the great principles of natural religion;

* There is something similar in Justin, who especially quotes the poets.

and it is quite obvious how they may be legitimately applied to good and useful purposes. But there is too much reason to fear that, in Clement's case, it indicated too much of a disposition to make advances towards the adherents of the old religions, and to accommodate Christianity, in some measure, to their views and principles. It is, indeed, when viewed in connection with other parts of Clement's system, something not unlike the germ of the notion which has been advocated by some latitudinarian writers of modern times, who have represented Christianity as little else than a more accurate, complete, and authoritative republication of the law or religion of nature.

His second work is called "*Παιδαγωγός*," and professes to unfold the instruction necessary for those who have been led to embrace Christianity, but who are still only in the position of catechumens,—only in the course of preparation for the ordinance of baptism; and in this part there comes out very clearly the lamentable deficiency of Clement's system, both in respect to doctrine and duty. He represents Christ as the "Pædagogus,"—the Great Teacher,—but he dwells much more upon the circumstances and manner of His teaching, than upon the matter or substance of it. And while he thus gives a very partial and defective view of Christ's office as a prophet, he almost wholly omits any reference to His offices as a priest and a king. And, thereafter, the greater part of the work is occupied, not with the exposition of truth or doctrine, but with practical directions for the regulation of conduct. The concluding work in the series is entitled "*Στρωματα*," and is devoted to the object of bringing out the character of the confirmed believer—the *γνωστικός*, or wise man, as Clement calls him; and here, too, as in the former work, we have to notice the deplorable deficiency of Clement's system, both of doctrine and duty. His scheme of doctrine is very meagre and latitudinarian, and his system of morality is characterized by very considerable errors and extravagances; and while great prominence is given to many points that are intrinsically insignificant and merely external, there is comparatively little said about those great essential internal principles of right action, on which the inspired writers principally insist. In regard to doctrine, there is no reason to suspect Clement of unsoundness upon the subject of the Trinity; but then it must be remembered that that truth has been always held in soundness so far as intellectual profession goes,

though retained in unrighteousness so far as its proper practical application is concerned, even in the apostate Church of Rome; and that, therefore, however fundamentally important it is in itself, and however well adapted to contribute in its practical applications to the spiritual nourishment and growth in grace of the most advanced believer, a profession of it is no very stringent *test* of men's proficiency either in the faith or in the experience of divine truth.

The other peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the gospel seem to have been less clearly and firmly held by Clement than by Justin and Irenæus; and the traces of deviation from sound doctrine which we had occasion to notice in them are somewhat more fully developed in him. He, more unequivocally than they, asserts the doctrine of free will in a sense which Calvinists in general would condemn. It cannot indeed be said that he denies or overturns the doctrines of grace; and he asserts explicitly, in opposition to some heretics of the period, that faith is not natural —*i.e.*, is not the product of the unaided efforts of men's natural powers—but is something supernatural and divine. Still it seems pretty plain that he had very inadequate views of what was necessary, and of what has been and is done on God's part, in order to the justification and sanctification of sinners; and ascribed to men's own powers a greater amount of influence in acquiring saving knowledge, and attaining to wisdom and righteousness,—in becoming first πιστοί, and then γνωστικοί,—than either Scripture or experience sanctions. Nay, his views upon this subject were so erroneous and confused, that on one occasion he goes so far as to say, that Christ assumed human nature, and came into the world, in order to show men that their own powers were sufficient to obey the will of God,*—a statement very much resembling the Socinianism or latitudinarianism of modern times, and which scarcely admits of any such explanation or modification as to consist with the possibility of believing that its author rightly understood and apprehended the fundamental principles of the gospel. It is but too evident that Clement, in his anxiety to show to the cultivated and literary youth of Alexandria how, by embracing Christianity, they might become wise and good, accommodated to their preconceived notions the system which he enforced upon

* Sculteti Medulla, p. 152.

them, and represented it as leaving to themselves a larger share of the capacity of producing the desired result than was at all consistent with the reality of the case, as represented to us in Scripture.

Besides this tendency to leave out of view the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and to exalt the natural powers and capacities of man in *virtual* opposition at least to the grace of the gospel, another evil result that flowed from Clement's addiction to philosophical pursuits, and his desire to conciliate men of a similar character, was, that he applied to Christianity the principle or device, common among the old philosophers, of an exoteric and an esoteric doctrine,—the one adapted to beginners, and the other to the more advanced or initiated; and that, in correspondence with this, he advocated the existence of a higher and lower standard of duty as well as knowledge,—the lower binding upon all, and the higher to be applied only to some, and, of course, implying no ordinary share of merit on the part of those who attained it. Both these ideas are substantially implied in the distinction which Clement elaborates between πίστις and γνῶσις. He seems to have been the first among the Christian teachers who gave any countenance to these distinctions, and must therefore be regarded as, to a large extent, responsible for the mischief wrought by them upon the mode in which both doctrine and duty were afterwards inculcated in the church. An allegorizing perversion of Scripture had been practised before this time by Christian writers; but to Clement attaches the responsibility of not only practising it, but of laying it down formally and explicitly, as a right and proper rule for the interpretation of Scripture.

Clement may be regarded as the earliest writer who has discussed in detail the subject of Christian morality; for the epistle to Zenas and Serenus, ascribed to Justin Martyr, is of somewhat dubious origin, though its general character corresponds well enough with the interval between Clement and the apostolical fathers, *i.e.*, with the period at which Justin lived. We have not, in any of the writings of the apostolic fathers, anything like a scheme or system of moral duty. We find in their writings nothing in this department but an earnest and affectionate pressing of the plain precepts of Scripture. Matters, however, were changed, and changed for the worse, before the end of the second century, when Clement wrote. His object and plan naturally

led him to describe pretty fully the system of Christian morality, and to enter into the details of ordinary duty; and it is melancholy to notice what a grievous declension there is from the scriptural mode of treating of this subject. He exhibits plain traces of the operation at once of what have been called the ascetic and the mystic systems of morality. On the one hand, he prohibits indulgences which the Scriptures do not condemn (as second marriages); and, on the other hand, he releases men from obligations which the Scriptures impose,—as, for example, when he denies the necessity for regular times and seasons for prayer and religious exercises, upon the ground that men ought *always* to cultivate a devotional spirit. He maintains, in flat contradiction to Scripture, that Christ was a mere Stoic, who was wholly exempted from, or raised above, all the ordinary feelings and affections of the human heart, and under this fictitious aspect holds Him up as a model for Christians to imitate. One of the worst features of his system of morality is, that his instructions manifest a great neglect of the state of the heart and the affections, and are to a large extent composed of minute rules and directions about external and very trivial things. As he enters with much minuteness of detail into the subjects of eating, drinking, furniture, feasts, perfumes, chaplets, baths, female ornaments, etc., he furnishes some curious enough information about the domestic manners and customs of the period when he lived, while he does not convey a very high idea of the state of morality among the professing Christians of that age and country; and sets before us little or nothing that is at all fitted to promote the cause of genuine Christian holiness of heart and life.

Such was the most eminent and influential Christian teacher of the end of the second, and beginning of the third, century, whose works have come down to us; and when we see what they contain, and what are their general character and tendency, we cannot but be impressed with the conviction that the church had already greatly degenerated, both in doctrine and in character. It is not surprising, and indeed rather creditable to the Church of Rome, that it has been made a matter of discussion among some of her writers whether Clement ever was canonized, *i.e.*, whether he be legally entitled to the designation of a saint, and should in consequence be invocated and supplicated to intercede with God on our behalf. It is rather creditable that doubts

should have been entertained upon this point; though, after all, there are many much worse men, and more heretical writers, in the Romish calendar of saints, than Clement of Alexandria.*

Sec. IV.—*Origen.*

Tertullian, the first of the Latin fathers, would come next in point of time; but it may be better, in the first place, to say a few words about Origen, the pupil of Clement, and his successor, as the head of the catechetical school of Alexandria. Origen occupied the first half of the third century; and though he was inferior to none of the fathers in talent and erudition, and rendered some very important services to the cause of Christian literature, yet we fear it must be said of him, that he extended and propagated the corruption both of doctrine and morality which Clement had done a good deal to promote, and thus exerted a most injurious influence upon the church. Origen was a most voluminous writer, and many of his works have come down to us; but there have been great controversies among learned men both as to their genuineness and their integrity. In regard to some of the works which have been ascribed to him, it is not easy to decide whether the evidence for or against their genuineness preponderates. Many of them have come down to us only in a Latin translation; and the translator Ruffinus has candidly informed us, that he altered many of Origen's statements, in order to render them more intelligible and less objectionable. Hence it has happened that, both in ancient and modern times, there have been great controversies in the church as to the true opinions of Origen, and the extent of his deviations from the orthodox faith.

A lengthened controversy took place upon this subject between Jerome and Ruffinus in the end of the fourth century,—Jerome attacking, and Ruffinus defending him; and in the course of the fifth and sixth centuries, the question whether Origen was a heretic was discussed in several councils, and the decisions were generally adverse to him. At last he was conclusively pronounced to be a heretic by the fifth general council held at Constantinople in the year 553.† The decision was unquestionably a right one,

* Natalis Alexander, saec. ii., cap. iv., art. vii.; Ittigius, saec. ii., pp. 61, 62.

† Natalis Alexander, saec. iii., cap. iii., art. xii., § iii.

for there can be no reasonable doubt that Origen grievously perverted some of the most important doctrines of the gospel. He was more deeply imbued with the principles of the eclectic or neo-Platonic philosophy than Clement, and applied it more boldly and unscrupulously than his instructor had ventured to do, in many daring speculations about God and the creation of the world, about angels and demons, and about the souls and destinies of men,—very much as if he had thrown off all regard to the authority of Scripture, and thought himself at full liberty to indulge without restraint in his own baseless speculations, even in regard to subjects which are plainly revealed to us. He believed in the eternity of matter, upon the ground that God could not have existed for *any* period of duration without putting forth the creative energy; thus setting a paltry piece of metaphysical speculation, upon a point of which man *can* know nothing except what God has been pleased to reveal, in opposition to the plain declarations of what he still professed to regard as the word of God. He believed in the pre-existence of human souls, and taught that they were confined in human bodies as a punishment for sins committed in some previous condition; and he believed in the ultimate salvation of all God's intelligent creatures, devils as well as men. He has spoken sometimes about the Trinity, and the person of Christ, in a way that has occasioned considerable difficulty to the defenders of the orthodoxy of the ante-Nicene fathers upon this point. Bishop Bull seems rather disposed to get rid of the necessity of investigating minutely the statements upon this subject contained in many of his other works, and thinks that his real opinion should be taken chiefly from his book against Celsus, because it was written when he was far advanced in life,—because it contains scarcely any of the extravagant and presumptuous speculations in which in his other works he so largely indulged,—and because it seems to have come down to us with a purer and more uncorrupted text than many of his other writings.* And in that very valuable work,—for such it undoubtedly is,—he very plainly asserts the divinity of Christ. It is certain, however, that Origen thought that the divine nature was united only with the soul, and not with the

* Bull's "Defensio Fidei Nicænæ," saec. ii., c. ix. For his general character of Origen, *vide* vol. v., p. 355; and for general arguments in favour of his orthodoxy on this subject, pp. 355, *et seq.* Oxford, 1846.

body of Christ; so that there was no proper hypostatical union, as it is commonly called,—no proper assumption by Christ of human nature. This groundless fancy led to his maintenance of what may be regarded as a still more serious and dangerous error, viz., a virtual denial that Christ offered any proper vicarious satisfaction to God, and thus made a real atonement for the sins of men. This, of course, overturns the Gospel of our salvation; and it is a melancholy instance of the extent to which an unwarrantable indulgence in mere philosophical speculations may lead men astray from the path of scriptural truth.

There is, however, another department in Origen's theology to which it may be more necessary to advert, not because it exhibits a more dangerous or deadly error,—for no error can be more dangerous or deadly than a denial of Christ's vicarious atonement,—but because Origen, while he received it in some measure from preceding writers, probably exerted more influence in diffusing it in the church than in propagating any of the other errors which he taught; and because it has enjoyed perhaps a wider diffusion in the church than any of them. We refer to what was afterwards called the Pelagian heresy. Jerome, who exerted himself so zealously and elaborately in the end of the fourth century to establish the heterodoxy of Origen in opposition to Ruffinus, has charged him with teaching the doctrines afterwards promulgated by Pelagius and his followers; and the charge, unlike some of Jerome's furious invectives, seems to rest upon a sold foundation. Origen, indeed, cannot be said to have taught the Pelagian *system* in expansion or in detail,—to have brought it out fully, and illustrated the relations or connections of its different parts; and it is not by any means certain that he would have subscribed to the doctrines of Pelagius, as it is not difficult to produce from his writings passages which have a more evangelical aspect, and are more accordant with the doctrines of grace. But it is certain that he has laid down principles which naturally, and by fair consequence, lead to the establishment of the Pelagian heresy, and consequently to the overthrow of the scheme of gospel grace; and that he has done so more explicitly than any preceding Christian writer. His doctrine of the pre-existence of souls, condemned to dwell in human bodies as a punishment for sins committed in a previous state, is inconsistent with any right scriptural apprehension of the doctrine of original sin; and erroneous and

defective views of the doctrine of original sin form the basis and foundation of Pelagianism.* Besides, he has asserted the freedom of the human will, in the sense in which it has been commonly maintained by Pelagians, much more explicitly than Justin, Irenæus, or even Clement; and his case is different from theirs with regard to this point, in this important particular, that he has made statements which enable us to see that what he has said about divine agency and divine grace, is not to be understood in such a sense as to favour what we believe to be the scriptural view upon this point, or as really implying more than Pelagians have commonly admitted. Pelagians can speak much and strongly about the universality and efficacy of God's agency, and about our dependence upon Him; and thus, when anything takes place or is effected which is regarded as a subject of joy or thanksgiving, they may ascribe it to the grace, or favour, or kindness of God. But it turns out, upon a careful investigation, that Pelagians, at least the more gross and open heretics among them, mean by this agency and grace of God, even when applied to spiritual results, effected upon men and by men,—to the renovation of their natures and the growing holiness of their hearts and lives,—nothing different in substance from what they understand by it when applied to the production of the ordinary events of Providence, by which the happiness of men is affected, or to the common actions of men produced by the ordinary operation of their faculties. They admit, of course, since they do not make a profession of atheism, that God's agency is in some way interposed in regard to all the actions of men as His creatures; that men are dependent upon this agency in all their bodily actions, and in all their mental operations; and are to look to Him as their sustainer, governor, and benefactor. But then they usually admit, or at least they may be driven to admit, that they do not hold that there is any difference *in kind* between the agency and grace of God as manifested in the production of their ordinary actions, and as manifested in the production of those which are spiritually good. In short,—for this is not an occasion for entering into detail upon the subject,—they virtually refuse to make any distinction between the ordinary agency of God, viewed simply as the Creator and

* *Vide* Walchii Miscellanea Sacra, Lib. i., Exercit. vii., Historia doctrinæ de peccato originis, p. 178. Buddæus, Instit. Theol. Dog., Lib. iii., c. ii., § 35, p. 844.

Governor of the world, in the production of all men's actions, and that special and peculiar agency in the production of actions *spiritually good*, which is ascribed in Scripture more immediately to the agency of the third person of the Godhead, in bringing men to Christ, and in preparing them for heaven.

We do not say that, where this distinction is not openly denied, there is no Pelagianism,—for many Pelagians, or at least semi-Pelagians, as they have been called, have involved their representations upon this subject in considerable obscurity by subtle discussions,—but we do say that there is undoubted and palpable Pelagianism wherever men give plain indications that this important distinction with respect to the divine agency in the production of men's actions is denied or disregarded. And this is what we fear applies to the case of Origen, and warrants us in regarding him as one of the precursors and promoters of the Pelagian heresy; for in commenting upon the declaration of the apostle, that God worketh in us, both to will and to do, of His good pleasure, he very explicitly lays down the principle, that as we have from God the power of moving, and are sustained or upheld by Him in the exercise of it, but determine *of ourselves* to move in one direction or another, *so* we have from God the power of willing, and are upheld by Him in the exercise of it, but have from ourselves the power of willing good or of willing evil.*

It is not at all surprising, considering the daring and presumptuous character of many of Origen's speculations, and the Pelagian cast of his sentiments, that he should have expressed great doubts, at least concerning God's omnipotence. Pelagian views, indeed, result from, or may be run up to, a virtual denial of the omnipotence and omniscience of God; and thus terminate in practically withdrawing from Him that glory and honour which He claims to Himself, and will not give to another.

Sec. V.—*Tertullian.*

There are only two other writers among those who flourished in the first three centuries to whom we mean to direct attention; and we do so, both because they exerted a considerable influence upon the state of opinion in the church, and because they were

* Natalis Alexander, saec. iii., cap. iii., art. xii., § ii.

intimately connected with the principal schisms which broke the outward unity of the church during this early period, and which occasioned the principal controversies that then took place among those who could with any propriety be called Christians, even as to outward profession. I refer to Tertullian and Cyprian,—the one a presbyter, and the other the Bishop of Carthage; and thus connected with what has been called the North African Church.

Tertullian was the earliest of the fathers whose works are written in Latin. He was a man of very fervid and vigorous mind, though his works are commonly written in a very rough, abrupt, and obscure style. He flourished during the first twenty or thirty years of the third century, and was therefore intermediate, in point of time, between Clement of Alexandria on the one side, and Origen and Cyprian on the other. He has been regarded as marking a pretty distinct era in the declension of the purity of evangelical doctrine and evangelical feeling in the early church. Neander* says of him, that he "stands on the boundary between two different epochs in the development of the Church." The leading characteristics of the system or state of things which Tertullian's works develop, and which he may be said to represent, as he no doubt did much to promote it, are,—first, that it does not, like that of the Alexandrian fathers, indicate the corrupting influence of philosophical speculations; and secondly, that *notwithstanding* this, it just as fully exhibits defective and erroneous apprehensions of the peculiar principles of the gospel; vehemently inculcates a morose, ascetic, and overstrained morality; and, both in regard to morality and religious worship, it manifests a most exaggerated sense of the importance of mere external things. With respect to Tertullian, as with respect to most of the fathers, there are some difficult and perplexing questions to be settled about the genuineness of some of the numerous and multifarious works which have been ascribed to him; and there is this additional peculiarity in his case, that when any attempt is made to estimate the value of his authority, attention must be given to the question, in some instances not easily decided, whether the particular treatise under consideration was written before or after he left the orthodox church, and joined the sect of the Montanists.

With regard to the views of Tertullian upon theological sub-

* Rose's translation, vol. i., p. 199.

jects, as collected from the works generally understood to have been written before he became a Montanist, the great general truth is, that he gives less prominence than any preceding writer to the peculiar principles of evangelical truth, and that he teaches some things rather more explicitly opposed to them. He entertained orthodox opinions, in the main, on the subject of the person of Christ, though he has made one very awkward statement about the eternity of the Son, which has afforded a handle to Arians, and has perplexed their opponents. But in regard to the offices and work of Christ, even about the atonement of Christ as the ground of a sinner's forgiveness, there are scarcely any clear, full, and satisfactory statements to be found in Tertullian's voluminous writings. He has asserted the power of man to do the will of God at least as explicitly, and to all appearance in as unsound a sense, as Clement of Alexandria. And, what is deserving of special attention, he has brought his views in regard to the natural powers of man, and the value and importance of the good works which he is able to perform, and does perform, to bear more explicitly than any preceding writer upon the great subject of the justification of a sinner. Although he has made statements on the subject of the justification of a sinner, which are pretty much in accordance with the general train of scriptural language, he has also made others which are clearly opposed to it. He has asserted the doctrine of justification by works; he has ascribed a meritorious bearing upon the forgiveness of sins to celibacy and almsgiving; and he has attaching to him the discredit of being the first to apply the word *satisfaction* to men's good deeds in their bearing upon the favour of God and the remission of sins; and though he certainly did not employ it in the modern Popish sense, he may thus be said to have laid the foundations of a mode of teaching—of a system of perverting Scripture—which, in the hands of the Church of Rome, has contributed so fearfully to the destruction of men's souls. He taught what may be called the common absurdities and extravagances of the fathers, in regard to angels, demons, and the souls of men departed. And in regard to this last point, it may be worth while to notice that he mentions and recommends—and he is the first Christian writer who does so—prayers for the dead, and offerings to them on the anniversaries of their deaths. He does not, indeed, connect these prayers and offerings, as the Papists do, with the

doctrine of purgatory; and it must be admitted that there have been many who advocated the lawfulness of praying for the dead, who did not either defend or practise it in the way, or upon the grounds, set forth by the Church of Rome. Still the practice in any form involves a clear deviation from the simplicity of Scripture, and is an indication of a state of mind unchastened and superstitious, and likely,—nay certain, as experience proves,—to lead to many other corruptions in the worship of God.

These are the chief things worth noticing in the theological views of Tertullian, so far as he may be fairly regarded as representing the opinions that then generally prevailed in what was called the catholic or orthodox church, as distinguished from the heretics or sectaries. Tertullian, however, ultimately joined the sect or schism of the Montanists, and we have now to advert briefly to their principles. Montanus flourished in Phrygia, soon after the middle of the second century; and though he did not deviate materially from the general system of doctrine usually taught by the church, he yet put forth such notions, and adopted such a course of procedure, as to have been justly separated from its communion. His position seems to have been in some measure the result of the reaction occasioned by the incipient attempt to give a more literary and philosophical character to the exposition of Christian subjects. Montanus and his followers professed to take the more spiritual views upon all topics, and even pretended to enjoy the supernatural and miraculous influences of the Holy Ghost. The opinions entertained, and the practices adopted, by Montanus and his followers, are fully stated in Mosheim.* I direct attention to them as constituting an interesting feature in the history of the early church, more especially as being the first distinct manifestation of a fanatical spirit among persons who did not deviate materially from the standard of orthodoxy in doctrine, and many of whom, there is reason to think, were possessed of genuine piety. In this point of view, the history of Montanism is interesting, and is fitted to afford us some useful lessons. There is one circumstance which is fitted to make it peculiarly interesting to us, and it is this—that while there have been many

* In his Church History; and more fully in his Commentarii, Saec. ii., secs. lxvi. lxvii., pp. 410–424. Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Rel., sec. v., vol. ii., pp. 176–195, Rose's translation.

subsequent instances, in the history of the church, of much folly and fanaticism manifested by persons who had fair claims to be regarded as possessed of piety, we have seen, in our own day, and in our own country, perhaps a fuller and more complete reproduction of all the leading features of Montanism, than the church has ever before witnessed.

I do not recollect anything in the history of the church so like Montanism in all its leading features as one remarkable system which we have seen rise, decline, and in a great measure fall, in our own day, though it has not had any distinct or specific name attached to it. In both cases there was, along with a professed subjection to Scripture, and an attempt to defend themselves by its statements, a claim to supernatural and miraculous communications of the Spirit, and a large measure of practical reliance upon these pretended communications for the warrant and sanction of their notions and practices. In both there was the same great and offensive prominence of women as the chief possessors and exhibitors of supernatural endowments, and the same perversions of the same passages of Scripture to countenance these pretensions. In both there was the same assumption of superior knowledge and piety, the same compassionate contempt for those who did not embrace their views and join their party, and the same ferocious denunciations of men who actively and openly opposed their pretensions, as the enemies of God, and the despisers of the Holy Ghost; and the same tone of predicting judgments upon the community, because it rejected their claims. And, as if to complete the parallel, we find that as ancient Montanism, with all its follies and extravagances, received the countenance and support of Tertullian, who, though a man of powerful and vigorous mind, frequently appeals with all seriousness and reverence to the visions and revelations of gifted sisters, so the Montanism of our own day received the countenance and support of one noble-minded and highly-gifted man, who might otherwise have rendered important and permanent services to the church of Christ, but whose history now stands out as a beacon to warn men from the rocks on which he struck. These modern exhibitions of fanatical folly, and unwarranted pretensions to supernatural communications, would scarcely have excited so much surprise, or produced so great a sensation, as they did in this country in recent times, if men had been better acquainted with the history of the church, and

with previous exhibitions of a similar kind; especially if they had been familiar with the history of ancient Montanism.

Montanism lasted as a distinct, but very obscure and insignificant, sect in Phrygia for two or three hundred years, though it exerted no influence upon the general condition of the church. The pretensions to the miraculous communications of the Spirit, indeed, soon ceased,—the experience of ancient, concurring with that of modern, times, in proving that such pretensions are very short-lived, that they are not easily supported, and uniformly disappear with the decay of the first blaze of fanaticism in which they have originated. The chief purpose to which the ancient Montanists applied their pretended communications of the Holy Spirit was, not the inculcation of new doctrines, but the improvement and elevation of the standard of morality, which they alleged that Christ and His apostles had left in an imperfect state. The chief improvements introduced by the Montanists into the moral system of Christianity were these: they made absolute the prohibition of second marriages, which were disapproved of, indeed, as we have seen, by other writers unconnected with that sect; they imposed a variety of fasts as imperatively binding at stated seasons; repealed the permission, or rather command, which Christ had given, to flee from persecution; and maintained the unlawfulness of absolving, or readmitting to the communion of the church, men who had once fallen into gross sins.

The last of these notions was brought out more fully by Novatian, about the middle of the third century, and made the ground of a schism. The way in which the errors of the Montanists about the imperative obligation of fasting were received in the church fully proves that up till that time it had been left free, as the Scripture leaves it, to be practised by individuals according to their own judgment and discretion. And this consideration affords a conclusive objection against the apostolicity of the laws about fasting, which are now, in the Church of Rome, embodied among what are called the commandments of the church, and which are made binding upon all her subjects, under pain of mortal sin.

Sec. VI.—*Cyprian.*

Cyprian became Bishop of Carthage about the middle of the third century, and suffered martyrdom in the persecution of the

Emperor Valerian, 260. He was a great reader and admirer of Tertullian, but he was a man of a much more amiable and beautiful character, as well as a much more pleasing and interesting writer, than his *master*, as he used to call him. Cyprian is altogether one of the finest characters we meet with in the history of the early church; and his letters may still be read with profit, both by private Christians prosecuting the work of sanctification in their own souls, and by ministers of the gospel desiring to cherish the spirit in which their arduous and often very difficult and trying work ought to be carried on. Milner gives a very full and interesting account of Cyprian, and some edifying and impressive extracts from his letters, all well worthy of perusal; and he subjoins to all this a very full, elaborate, and, in the main, just and judicious comparison between him and his great cotemporary, Origen. Cyprian seems to have taken his views of divine truth somewhat more purely and simply from the Scriptures than many of the early writers; to have had less tendency than many of them to mix up scriptural truth with philosophical speculations, or to invent mere fancies of his own without any scriptural warrant; and to have had somewhat more of at least the spirit of the gospel. He was, indeed, far from being free from error; for while he ascribes the conversion of sinners, and the remission of all sins previous to conversion, to the grace of God through Christ, he does talk as if he thought that their subsequent sins might be washed away by penitence, almsgiving, and other good works. Neither can it be denied that, with all his personal and ministerial excellences, he did contribute to the propagation of unsound and dangerous errors upon some points. He gave some countenance to certain honours being paid to martyrs and confessors, which led at length, though not in his time, to their being invocated and worshipped. He was a zealous inculcator of obedience to ecclesiastical authorities, and is usually regarded as having done something to elevate the standard of episcopal domination, though even the Cyprianic bishop was very different from the modern one; and he advocated some notions about the absolute necessity and ordinary effects of baptism, which tended to corrupt the doctrine of the sacraments, and to accelerate the progress of superstition.

The works of Cyprian are the great battle-field of the Prelatic controversy, so far as the testimony of the first three centuries is concerned; and there are several important works upon both sides

of this controversy, whose very titles are taken from Cyprian's name; as, for example, on the Prelatic side, Bishop Sage's "Principles of the Cyprianic Age," and, a much larger and more important work, his Vindications of them; and, on the Presbyterian side, Principal Rule's "Cyprianic Bishop Examined," and a more valuable work, Jameson's "Cyprianus Isotimus," both of them written in answer to Sage. The principal controversies in which Cyprian himself was engaged,—the principal, indeed, which agitated the church in his time,—were, first, the schism which Novatian made in the church of Rome, in which Cyprian strenuously supported the Roman bishop Cornelius; and the other about re-baptizing those who had been baptized by heretics, in which he came into open collision with Stephen, one of Cornelius' successors. It is very certain, from a variety of statements in Cyprian's works, that even before the middle of the third century, very many had joined the church who were not really believers in Jesus Christ, and that it contained not a few whose outward conduct even was far from adorning the profession they made. Accordingly, in the persecution under the Emperor Decius, a great many professing Christians apostatized from the faith, and offered sacrifice to heathen idols. After the persecution ceased, and these persons—the lapsed, as they were called—asked readmission into the church, great difficulties arose as to the way in which their case should be disposed of. Cyprian, and the church in general, were inclined to receive them, provided they made a credible profession of penitence, and submitted to the ordinary penitential discipline. The number of the lapsed, however, was so great, that it was not easy to enforce these regulations. A device was fallen upon, which is curious, as indicating the gross ignorance and inconsideration which then prevailed, and the formal and superstitious spirit that was brought to bear upon ecclesiastical arrangements. Men who had suffered something in the persecution without lapsing, and were in consequence called confessors, were applied to by the lapsed to ask for them readmission into the church, without submitting to public penance. Many of these confessors—under the influence, there is reason to fear, of vanity and self-conceit—complied with these requests; and, as a compliment to these confessors, very many of the impenitent lapsed were readmitted into communion. The absurdity of this is too gross to need any exposure, and its prevalence affords a very unfavourable indication of the internal state

of the church. Cyprian opposed this device, and though in some respects he gave undue and unwarranted honour to martyrs, he severely censured these confessors for this gross and senseless abuse of the respect that was entertained for them.

This practice, however, was extensively acted upon in the church; and it seems to have driven Novatian, who was one of the presbyters of the church of Rome, into the opposite extreme, and led him to maintain, as the Montanists had done, that the lapsed, and other persons who had been guilty of heinous crimes, should be for ever excluded from church communion. They did not deny that they might be forgiven by God, but they thought they ought never to be forgiven by the church,—a notion manifesting great ignorance of the church's duty and functions, but yet based apparently upon a perversion of sounder views than then generally obtained of the elements of which the church *ought* to be composed. Novatian and his supporters, however, went further than this; and, by a process of exaggeration and extravagance which has been often similarly exemplified since his time, he contended, not only that the church ought for ever to exclude the lapsed from her communion, but also, moreover, that the church which admitted the lapsed, even upon a credible profession of penitence, became thereby so polluted, that her communion ought to be renounced. Accordingly, upon this ground, he himself and his followers renounced the communion of the church of Rome, and set up a rival communion of their own in the same city, of which Novatian became the bishop, or, as the Romanists call him in the style of a later age, the antipope. These views of Novatian had not in themselves any foundation in Scripture, but being opinions which are rather apt to spring up in the minds, and to commend themselves to the feelings, of pious men, when the communion of the visible church has fallen into a condition of laxity and impurity, they received a considerable measure of support; and it is in some respects creditable to the church that they did so. They have at various times been in substance brought forward, though most commonly by men who were more distinguished for pious feeling than for soundness of judgment. Cyprian strenuously opposed Novatian, and by his high character and great influence in the church afforded important assistance to Cornelius in his contest with his rival. This controversy is interesting chiefly as casting some light upon the state of doctrine, sentiment, and practice in

the church at the period at which it took place. Mosheim, in his Commentaries, gives a full view of the grounds taken by the different parties, and of the manner in which they defended them; and Neander, in treating of this subject,* has some very beautiful and striking observations on the measures of truth and error exhibited *by both parties* on the two general subjects that might be said to be involved in the controversy,—viz., first, the principles of penitence; and secondly, what it is that constitutes the idea and essence of a true church.

The other controversy, in which Cyprian took an active part, and in which he came into open collision with Stephen, Bishop of Rome, was upon this point,—whether persons who had been baptized by heretics should, or should not, on applying for admission into any branch of the orthodox or catholic church, be baptized again. The doctrine and practice of the churches upon this point varied. The Asiatic churches in general held that the baptism of heretics was null and void, and that persons coming from heretical communions should be baptized, just as if they had never received baptism at all. The church of Rome, and most of the Western churches, took the opposite side, and maintained that the baptism of heretics was valid, and that those who had received it should not be re-baptized. Cyprian took the side of the Eastern churches, and strenuously supported the necessity of re-baptizing those who had been baptized in the communion of the heretical sects. Both parties were of one mind, in holding the general position that baptism should not in any case be repeated; but the question was, whether baptism, administered by heretics, was really baptism, and served the purposes for which baptism was instituted. Stephen appealed to the tradition of the church in opposition to re-baptizing; but Cyprian, in reply to this appeal, gives us a noble testimony to the perfection and supremacy of the Scripture, as the only standard by which the controversy ought to be decided. Even Scripture, however, cannot be said to furnish any very direct or decisive evidence upon the subject. We find on both sides of the question, as then discussed, many very injudicious and unsatisfactory attempts to extract from scriptural statements a direct and precise decision upon the point. Scripture plainly enough sanctions

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* Commentarii, Saec. iii., secs. xv. and xvi., pp. 512–527. Neander, Hist. of Christ. Rel., vol. i., pp. 237–268, Rose's translation.

the opinion, that baptism, in order to be valid, *i.e.*, in order to be what ought to be held and reckoned baptism—whatever may be the effects resulting from it—ought to be administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Beyond this it does not appear that there are any very clear or satisfactory materials in Scripture for laying down any other definite proposition on the subject except this,—that baptism, in order to be valid, and to be held and received as such, so that it should not be repeated, must be administered in a solemn and orderly way, *in a communion which is entitled to be regarded as in some sense a branch of the church of Christ.* Those who believe that infant baptism is unlawful will, of course, in consistency, regard it as null and void. But, irrespective of this peculiarity, there does not seem to be clear scriptural ground for laying down any other doctrines upon this subject than the two which have been stated; and the second and most important of them, viz., that it must be administered in the communion of a society which, however erroneous in doctrine and corrupt in practice, is yet regarded as a church of Christ, leaves the whole subject on a footing very loose and undetermined. This general principle does not seem to have been formally denied by either party in the controversy; but there were peculiarities in the way in which it was necessary then to apply it which have not commonly existed, and no very clear or definite views then obtained as to what the unity of the church consisted in.

The generality of what were then called the heretical sects might with truth, and without any breach of charity, be denied the character of churches of Christ; so that whatever we may think of the abstract original principle, Cyprian was right in denying that these baptisms, with which they had then actually to do in practice, should be held as valid.* If there were any heretical sects at this period subsisting in distinct communions in addition to the Gnostic sects—and upon this point we have no very certain information—they must have consisted of persons who denied the divinity of our Saviour, under the name of Ebionites and Artemonites; and *they* might be justly denied to be churches of Christ. It is not very wonderful that Cyprian, in maintaining, in these circumstances, the necessity of re-baptizing, was led into some

* Dionysius of Alexandria, though agreeing in the main with Cyprian, was disposed, much to his honour, to except the Montanists.

notions upon the unity and catholicity of the church, which are of an unscriptural and dangerous character, and which, though on this occasion employed by him in opposing the Bishop of Rome, have been since very largely employed by that church in the construction and defence of her hierarchic and exclusive system. It was the fact at this time, that the great body of the churches throughout the world were living, so far as they had the means and opportunities of knowing and holding intercourse with each other, in terms of friendly communion; and that they were, upon the whole, warranted in regarding these heretics who were not united with them as not entitled to the character of churches of Christ. *This*, which was merely true *de facto* at the time, was converted by Cyprian into a sort of general principle or doctrine, in unfolding which he brought out, for the first time, with anything like clearness or distinctness, the idea of a catholic church, comprehending all the true branches of the church of Christ, and *bound together by a visible and external unity.* This was Cyprian's grand contribution to the progress of error and corruption in the church, and the ultimate growth of the Papacy; and we must not allow our esteem for the personal piety and excellence of the man to blind us to the magnitude of the error,—a temptation to which, in this case, Milner has very manifestly yielded.

Cyprian's views about the re-baptizing of heretics did not generally prevail in the church; but, on the contrary, soon lost ground,—chiefly, we believe, from the rise and growth in subsequent generations of other sects which deviated less widely from the general doctrines of the church, and which, therefore, men shrunk from denying to be in any sense churches of Christ. The general feeling and practice of the great body of the church has been decidedly opposed to re-baptizing, both in ancient and in modern times. And no Protestant church has ever denied the validity even of Popish baptism, until this was done recently by the most influential and respectable section of the Presbyterian church in the United States of North America. But though, upon the particular topic of re-baptizing, Cyprian's views have been generally rejected both by Papists and Protestants, the principles he laid down in defending his cause have had a wide and general currency, and have been carried out to applications which he never dreamed of. He may not unfairly be regarded as the author of the idea of the necessity of the whole church, and all its branches, being

connected together in an external visible unity,—an idea which forms the very basis of the Papal system. Cyprian, indeed, did not hold the necessity of one visible head of the church, possessed of authority or jurisdiction over all its branches; and nothing can be more clear and certain, from the way in which the controversy between him and Stephen was conducted, than that neither Cyprian nor anybody else at that time regarded the Bishop of Rome as the sovereign ruler of the church. Cyprian regarded the visible unity of the church as embodied in the unity of the episcopate, or the combination of bishops, each independent in his own sphere, all equal to each other in point of power and authority, and all to be regarded as equal colleagues in the government of the church. These views are stated by Cyprian so fully and so clearly, that they cannot be misunderstood or explained away; and of course they are manifestly inconsistent with the idea that he would ever have sanctioned the modern pretensions of the Papal See.

But it cannot be denied that, in unfolding his idea of visible unity, he has put forth some obscure and unintelligible statements* about a certain primacy of rank or order, though not of power or jurisdiction, given to Peter over the other apostles, as the symbol, type, or embodiment of the unity which Christ imposed upon His church; and of these statements the Church of Rome has not been slow to take advantage. It is quite certain, however, that Cyprian held that all bishops had equal power and authority, each being in his own sphere independent of any other bishop; that he denied to the then Bishop of Rome any jurisdiction over the churches of Africa; and that he did not ascribe to Peter any jurisdiction over the other apostles, but merely a certain primacy of rank or order. Nay, it can, we think, be proved that he ascribed to bishops only a similar primacy of rank or order above presbyters, without regarding them as possessed by divine authority of any real, superior, inherent power or jurisdiction. On these grounds, Presbyterians, Prelatists, and Papists have all confidently appealed to Cyprian in support of their respective opinions. All these three parties have something plausible to allege in their behalf from the writings of Cyprian; though the Papists, as usual, have had recourse to forgery and interpolation in order to

* So Barrow thought them.—The Pope's Supremacy.

increase the strength of their evidence.* The real and the whole truth upon this point—and it is of considerable importance in the history of church government—I am persuaded may be embodied in the three following propositions:—First, there is enough in the writings of Cyprian to prove that, down even till the middle of the third century, the substantial identity of bishops and presbyters was maintained; and that the idea of the episcopate being, by divine appointment, a distinct, independent, higher office than the presbyterate, was yet not generally received; Secondly, There is enough to prove that in Cyprian's time, and in a great measure through his exertions, an important distinction between bishops and presbyters, implying some superiority not well defined, of the one over the other, became prevalent; and Thirdly, That he has laid down, though very vaguely and obscurely, some principles which, when fully carried out and applied, lay a good foundation for maintaining that there should be one visible head of the whole church, and for vesting some kind or degree of primacy or supremacy in the Bishop of Rome.

* Gieseler, i., p. 154. Note, Cunningham's translation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST TWO CENTURIES.

After having given a brief account of the most eminent writers of the first three centuries, and of the theological views which they entertained and inculcated, we proceed now to take a brief *general* survey of this period, viewed as a whole; especially in its bearing upon those subjects connected with the doctrine, government, and worship of the church, which still give rise to differences of opinion, and to controversial discussions. To some subjects of this description I have already adverted, in considering the leading writers individually, and I need not now enlarge upon them. Enough has been said to show the grounds on which all true Protestants have ever refused to admit that the authority of the fathers should be held to be binding and conclusive, either in the interpretation of particular passages of Scripture, or in the exposition of the scheme of divine truth.

The obligation which all Roman Catholic priests have undertaken,—viz., that they will never interpret Scripture *except according to the unanimous consent* of the fathers,—is one which cannot be discharged, except by abstaining wholly from interpreting Scripture; for the unanimous consent of the fathers about the interpretation of scriptural statements, except those in the explanation of which all sane men are agreed, has no existence; and every Papist of any learning must be fully aware of this. Many of the patristic interpretations of Scripture are now universally rejected, and this applies to some cases in which their consent was at least as general as in regard to any passages that could be specified. What has been called a *catholic* consent,—and this must imply at least a general concurrence of the great body of the early writers in the exposition of doctrines,—is just about as difficult to be found as their *unanimous* consent, in the interpretation of Scripture. Indeed, the unreasonableness of the principle of resting upon the

authority of the fathers in the interpretation of Scripture, or in the formation of our theological opinions, is so clear, and has been so fully demonstrated, that there is a very strong temptation, in adverting to it, to give expression to feelings both of contempt and indignation towards those who profess to maintain it. It is not very easy to look upon them, as a body, in any other light than as being either weak and silly men, with whom it would be a sort of degradation to argue, or as daring and deliberate corrupters of the truth as it is in Jesus; although in this, as in almost every case of error, there are special instances of exception in men, whom it would be unfair to rank in either class, and in regard to whom we must be contented with expressing our unqualified surprise that they should have been deceived by such an illusion.

Bishop Bull, for instance, undoubtedly a great man, solemnly declared, when writing in defence of the Arminian and anti-scriptural view of the doctrine of justification, that "if there could but be found any one proposition that he had maintained, in all his Harmony, repugnant to the doctrine of the Catholic and primitive Church, he would immediately give up the cause, sit down contentedly under the reproach of a novelist, openly retract his error or heresy, make a solemn recantation in the face of the Christian world, and bind himself to perpetual silence ever after."* Now, if the learned bishop had meant by this extraordinary statement merely to declare his thorough conviction that he was quite able to establish the opinions he had actually taught by an appeal to the catholic and primitive church, it would not have been so objectionable in point of principle, though it is not an easy matter to find out any definite standard in what might, with anything like propriety, be called the teaching of the catholic primitive church upon the subject he was discussing. But he evidently meant something more than this,—viz., first, that *de facto* there is a definite standard of the teaching of the primitive catholic church, with respect to the points controverted among modern theologians, which may be ascertained; and secondly, that *de jure* this primitive catholic teaching, when once ascertained, is an authoritative standard by which men are bound to regulate their opinions. Now, few things have been more conclusively established than the utter falsehood

* Waterland's First Defence, Preface, vol. i., p. 272, 2d Edit.

of *both* these positions; and sufficient materials have, I think, already been afforded to prove this.

These sentiments of Bishop Bull are in substance the same as those commonly propounded by the Tractarians, who talk much of catholic consent, as they call it, as an infallible standard of faith; while they arbitrarily and unwarrantably limit the sources from which this catholic consent is to be ascertained to the writings of the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. There is a mode of speaking upon this subject that is very common among Prelatic writers, even those who do not go so far as the Tractarians upon the subject of catholic consent, or on the existence and authority of the pretended rule,—"quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus,"—that ought to be adverted to and guarded against. They admit the supreme authority of Scripture as the only standard of faith, and deny any proper authority in religious matters to the fathers, or to the teaching of the early church; but still they are fond of talking about the fathers in such a way as seems to imply that they do ascribe to them authority, or something like it, after all. They talk much of the importance and necessity of studying the fathers, and investigating the doctrines of the early church; and of the *great* assistance thus furnished in ascertaining the meaning of Scripture, and the truth of doctrine. Much, of course, may be said truly and justly to this effect; but it is often said in such a way as seems to imply that, in some vague sense, the fathers, or the early but post-apostolic church, have some authority in matters of faith and practice; and hence the importance of forming clear and precise ideas of the distinction between what is authoritative, properly so called, and what is merely auxiliary,—of seeing and remembering that the difference is not in degree, but in kind,—and also of forming a pretty definite conception of the nature and amount of the assistance which the fathers do afford. Men sometimes talk as if they had a vague notion of the early fathers having had some inferior species of inspiration,—some peculiar divine guidance differing from that of the apostles and evangelists in degree rather than in kind,—and somehow entitling their views and statements to more deference and respect than those of ordinary men. All notions of this sort are utterly baseless, and should be carefully rejected. Authority, properly so called, can be rightly based only upon inspiration; and inspiration is the guidance of the Spirit of God, infallibly securing

against all error. When men can be proved to possess this, it is of course our duty to regard all their statements as invested with authority, and to receive them at once with implicit submission, without any further investigation, and without appealing to any other standard. Where there is not inspiration, there is no proper authority,—there *should* be no implicit submission, and there *must* be a constant appeal to some higher standard, if such a standard exist. The fathers, individually or collectively, were not inspired; they therefore possess no authority whatever; and their statements must be estimated and treated just as those of any other ordinary men. And when we hear strong statements about the absolute necessity of studying the fathers,—of the great assistance to be derived from them in interpreting Scripture, and in fixing our opinions,—and of the great responsibility incurred by running counter to their views, we always suspect that the men who make them are either, unconsciously perhaps, ascribing to the fathers some degree of inspiration, and some measure of authority; or else are deceiving themselves by words or vague impressions, without looking intelligently and steadily at the actual realities of the case. We have seen, in surveying the writings of the fathers of the first three centuries, that they were not in general judicious or accurate interpreters of Scripture; that most of them have given interpretations of important scriptural statements which no man now receives; that many of them have erred, and have contradicted themselves and each other in stating the doctrines of the Bible; and that, in so far as their views are accordant with Scripture upon subjects that have been, and still are, controverted, they are not brought out more fully or explicitly than in Scripture itself, or in a way in any respect better adapted to convince gainsayers, even if they were admitted to be authoritative.

A vague notion seems to lurk in men's minds that the fathers must have transmitted to us much which they had learned from the apostles, and which may thus be fairly regarded as invested with some authority. Now this notion can be applied with any measure of plausibility only to those who themselves associated with the apostles, and who are commonly called the apostolic fathers; although many, from inconsideration or confusion of thought, are in the habit of applying it indiscriminately to the fathers of the second, the third, and even the fourth centuries; and yet it is remarkable, as we have shown,—first, that the

apostolic fathers do not give, and do not profess to give, us any information as derived from the apostles about the meaning of scriptural statements, or the true import of Christian doctrines; and secondly, that in the writings and transactions of the second century we have the most conclusive proof that there was then no apostolical tradition not contained in Scripture (for the fathers of that age usually meant by *tradition* what was actually contained in the Bible) on which *any reliance* could be placed,—positions which, if true, utterly subvert the notion that any very *material* assistance of a peculiar kind is to be derived from the fathers either of the earlier or of subsequent centuries. But enough has been said upon this subject; more, perhaps, than its importance deserves.

Whatever weight may be ascribed to the opinions of the fathers, and on whatever grounds the weight that is ascribed to them may be made to rest, no one disputes the propriety and the importance of ascertaining, as far as we can, what their views really were; and most theologians in modern times, whatever opinions they may entertain upon the general question of the deference to be paid to the fathers, have shown some desire to exhibit in their own behalf the testimony of the early church, whenever it could with any plausibility be adduced; and this has given rise to a great deal of learned, voluminous, and often intricate and wearisome discussion. We have seen that in the third century, and even before the end of the second, there were controversies in the church as to what were the doctrines and practices of the apostles upon some points; and that both parties appealed to the tradition of the church, as well as to Scripture, without being able to convince each other by the arguments derived from the one source any more than by those derived from the other. This was still more extensively the case in the fourth and fifth centuries, when, in the Arian and Pelagian controversies, both parties appealed to the testimony of the primitive church. Both in these more ancient and in more modern times, men have acted upon a notion, more or less distinctly conceived, and more or less earnestly maintained, that the fact of a doctrine or system of doctrines having been held by the early church, afforded *some* presumption that it had been taught by the apostles. As a general position, this may, perhaps, be admitted to be true; but it needs to be very cautiously applied, and to be restricted within very narrow limits. Could we fully

and exactly ascertain, *as we certainly cannot*, the doctrine that generally prevailed in the church at large in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, we would confidently expect that it would be to a great extent the same as that which they taught; and could the prevailing views of that age be distinctly and unequivocally ascertained upon some particular point in regard to which Scripture had spoken so obscurely that we had great difficulty in making up our minds as to what is really taught, we might be disposed to allow the testimony of the immediately post-apostolic age, if we had it, to turn the doubtful scale. This may be admitted to be true abstractly; but it does not, in point of fact, apply to any of the actual realities of the case. And when we look more at things as they are, we see the necessity of much caution and circumspection in this matter.

The history of the church abundantly confirms what the Scripture gives us reason to expect, viz., that errors and heresies may creep in *privily*,—the enemy sowing the tares while men are sleeping. The history of the church fully proves, moreover, that very considerable changes may be effected in the prevalent opinions of a church or nation, and of course of many churches or nations, in a comparatively short period of time; and without, perhaps, our being able to trace them to any very definite or palpable cause. Many instances might be adduced of the prevalent theological views of a church or nation undergoing a very considerable change, even in the course of a single generation, and this too without calling forth much public opposition; and considering how very scanty are the remains we now have of the writings and documents of the first three centuries,—what a contrast there is in this respect between the first three centuries of the Christian era and the last three,—it is by no means certain that important changes of doctrine may not have taken place in what is called the early church, without our having any very specific evidence regarding them.

Indeed, it is certain, in point of fact, that there was a gradual change going on more or less rapidly in the church, even from the time of the apostles, in regard to matters of doctrine, as well as of government and worship. It is not possible, with the evidence before us, to believe that the views of the apostolical fathers were in all respects precisely the same as those of the second century, or those of the second precisely the same as those of the third.

We can trace a progress,—and the progress is generally in an unsound direction,—in the direction of greater deviation from Scripture, of adding what Scripture wants, and of keeping back or perverting what Scripture contains. It is not, as Papists allege, a fuller development,—a bringing out more fully and explicitly, as circumstances demanded,—of what is contained in Scripture, and was taught at least in its germs or rudiments by the apostles. The actual features of the progressive change are inconsistent with this theory. We see scriptural principles more and more cast into the background. We see many things brought out, professed, and practised, which not only are uncountenanced by Scripture, but are plainly inconsistent either with its express statements or with its general spirit and principles. That a change was going on, and that this was its general character, is too obvious and certain as a matter of fact to admit of its being disproved, either by the general theory of the Papists as to Christ's promises and His superintendence over His church, or by general presumptions founded upon the character of the men, and their supposed means of acquiring an accurate knowledge of divine things. If we are to take the word of God as our standard, and if it be at all fitted to serve the purposes of a rule or guide, this is a conclusion which may be fully established, and which we are not only warranted, but bound, to hold fast. Still, with all these drawbacks, and with very great practical difficulties, in regard to many questions, of arriving at a very satisfactory result, it is important and interesting to ascertain, as far as we can, what was the system of doctrine, government, and worship that prevailed in the church in early times. The chief discussions which have taken place in modern times with respect to the views of the early church, and which are still carried on in the present day, have been directed to the objects of ascertaining what were the opinions that then generally prevailed in regard to what are commonly called the doctrines of grace; in regard to the multifarious topics involved in the controversy between Protestants and Papists, and the government of the church in general; and in regard to the doctrine of the sacraments and worship, and to the testimony of the primitive church upon these different subjects. And to the discussions which have taken place in more modern times with respect to the true import of that testimony, I propose now to advert in succession.

Sec. I.—*The Doctrines of Grace.*

By the doctrines of grace are commonly understood those great fundamental truths in which churches, usually reckoned evangelical, agree; and more especially the doctrines of the entire corruption and depravity of man by the fall; justification by faith alone without works, on the ground of what Christ has done and suffered in our room; and regeneration and sanctification by the special operation of the Holy Ghost. The doctrines of absolute personal election and the perseverance of the saints, are sometimes spoken of as peculiarities of the Calvinistic system, as distinguished from the more general system of evangelical truth; and it is no doubt true, in point of fact, that many men have held—though, as we think, inconsistently, and without following out their own professed principles to their proper legitimate results—the doctrines usually called evangelical, without admitting what have been described as Calvinistic peculiarities. But in speaking of the doctrines of grace in connection with the testimony of the primitive church, we take the expression in the wide sense of the doctrines of the Reformation, or the Calvinistic system; especially as it will scarcely be disputed that the testimony of the early primitive church is as favourable to the Calvinistic peculiarities, as they are often called, of predestination and perseverance, as to any of the other doctrines commonly designated as evangelical,—with the exception, perhaps, of the doctrine of original sin, the evidence for which in antiquity is usually admitted to be strong, even by those who deny the force of the evidence adduced from this source in favour of any of the other doctrines of the evangelical system. Calvinists and anti-Calvinists have both appealed to the early church in support of their respective opinions, although we believe it cannot be made out that the fathers of the first three centuries give any very distinct deliverance concerning them. These important topics did not become subjects of controversial discussion during that period; and it holds almost universally in the history of the church, that until a doctrine has been fully discussed in a controversial way by men of talent and learning taking opposite sides, men's opinions regarding it are generally obscure and indefinite, and their language vague and confused, if not contradictory. These doctrines did not become subjects of controversial discussion till what is

called the Pelagian controversy, in the beginning of the fifth century. At that time, Augustine, the great defender of the truth against Pelagius and his followers, while appealing to the early writers in support of the doctrines which he had established from Scripture, and which he has the distinguished honour of having first developed in a connected and systematic way, admitted that many of them had spoken without due care and precision upon these points, but contended that in the main they concurred in his opinions. It is very certain that they were not Pelagians, for they almost universally admitted that there was a corruption of man's moral nature introduced and spread among mankind by the fall, which Pelagius denied. That they were wholly free from what was afterwards called semi-Pelagianism, or that they held fully and explicitly the Augustinian or Calvinistic system, is not by any means so clear.

The substance of the matter is this: The apostolical fathers generally use the language of Scripture upon these subjects, while they scarcely make any statements which afford us materials for deciding in what precise sense they understood them. They leave the matter very much where Scripture leaves it, and where, but for the rise of errors needing to be contradicted and opposed, it might still have been left. He who sees Augustinian or Calvinistic doctrines clearly and explicitly taught in the Bible, will have no difficulty in seeing also plain traces of them at least in the works of the apostolic fathers; and he who can pervert the statements of Scripture into an anti-Calvinistic sense, may, by the same process, and with equal ease, distort the apostolic fathers. This at least is certain, that while it has been often asserted with great confidence, that Calvinistic principles are utterly opposed to the doctrine of the ancient church—that they were never heard of till invented by Augustine—there is nothing in the writings of any of the immediate successors of the apostles in the least opposed to them; nothing which, even abstracting from the clear testimony of Scripture in their favour, affords any presumption that they were not taught to the churches by the apostles. There is, to say the least, nothing whatever in this primitive antiquity, in the writings of those who associated with the apostles, to weaken, even if we were to admit that anything derived from any other source could weaken, the testimony which they have given in their own inspired writings. If corruption was to find its way into the

church, *these*, it might be expected, would be the doctrines which it would first assail, more openly or more covertly, because they are most decidedly opposed to the leading tendencies of man's natural character, to the ungodliness and pride of the human heart. These were the doctrines which were most thoroughly expelled from all the pagan religions, even although in some other points they retained some traces of the religion of nature, or some remnants of a primitive revelation; and they were the doctrines which were most thoroughly corrupted in the system of later Judaism,—the Judaism of our Saviour's days,—and so, accordingly, we find it to have been in the Christian church.

We have already had occasion to notice that the point where erroneous and defective views upon the doctrines of grace seem to have first insinuated themselves, was in regard to the freedom of the human will, explained and applied in such a way as to lead ultimately at least to an obscuration, if not a denial, at once of the doctrine of the total depravity of man, and of the necessity of the special operation of the Holy Ghost, in order to the production in man's character or life of anything spiritually good. There is some difficulty, as I have mentioned before, in understanding precisely what is the full bearing and import of many of the statements of the fathers of the second and third centuries upon this subject, because they occur commonly in the course of observations directed against the fate or stoical necessity which was very generally advocated by the Gnostic sects. This circumstance renders it very difficult to determine whether at first, at least, they really meant to ascribe to free will an *αὐτεξουσιον*, more than Calvinistic divines have generally conceded to it. But there can be no doubt that error steadily increased in this direction, and that many of them came to entertain views upon this subject plainly inconsistent with what the Scripture teaches as to the natural impotency of man, and the necessity of divine agency; and that, though never wholly abandoning the doctrine of original sin, they soon came to overlook two distinctions of fundamental importance on this subject,—viz., *first*, the distinction between the power or ability of man in his fallen and in his unfallen condition; and, *secondly*, the distinction between man's power or ability in matters external or merely moral, and in matters purely spiritual; that is, which have respect to real obedience to the law which God has imposed, and to the doing of those things which He re-

quires, that we may escape His wrath and curse due to us for our sins. These two distinctions, I have said, are of fundamental importance. They were, however, generally overlooked by the early fathers. Augustine, of course, understood them, else he could never have rendered such important services as he did to the cause of sound doctrine. They were brought out fully and prominently by the reformers. They are distinctly set forth in the standards of our church; and I am persuaded that, where they are not distinctly admitted and fully applied, it is impossible to give a complete and accurate exposition of the system of Christian theology, as taught in the sacred Scriptures. Some modern writers have contended, not only that the fathers of the second and third centuries taught anti-Calvinistic doctrines, but also that the Gnostic heretics against whom they contended, taught Calvinism. This, however, proceeds upon a misrepresentation of Calvinistic doctrines, as if they really made God the author of sin, and took away from man that freedom of will which is necessary to moral agency,—charges which have been often adduced against them, but have never been established.

On most of the other points involved in the evangelical or Calvinistic system, it can scarcely be said that the fathers of the second and third centuries have given any very distinct or explicit testimony. That these great doctrines were not very thoroughly understood, were not very prominently brought forward, and were not very fully applied, is but too evident. That they had been wholly laid aside, and that an opposite set of doctrines had been substituted in their room, is what cannot be established. Calvinists and anti-Calvinists have produced sets of extracts from the writings of the fathers, professing to find in them full support for their respective opinions.* But upon a careful and impartial survey of this matter, it is evident that all that these collections of extracts, when taken together and viewed in combination, really prove, is that these fathers had no very clear or definite conceptions upon the subject, that they did not very well understand *what* they meant to teach, and that from ignorance and confusion they not unfrequently fell into contradictions. All this, however, —which is clearly the true state of the case as a matter of fact,—

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* Whitby on the Five Points, and Gill's Cause of God and Truth. Tomline; Scott.

does really, when viewed in connection with the fact that, with the progress of time, the Calvinistic testimonies became less full and clear, and the anti-Calvinistic ones more so—*i.e.*, till we come down to the era of the Pelagian controversy—furnish presumption in favour of Calvinism; for there can be no doubt that the tendency, from the apostolic age downwards, was to corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel, to introduce into the doctrines of the church mere human speculations, and to accommodate them to the tastes and prejudices of irreligious men.

The process was somewhat similar to what took place in the Church of Scotland, and in other churches, in the course of last century, when personal religion was decaying, when sound evangelical doctrine was disappearing, and when very defective and confused notions of scriptural principles were extensively prevailing; while, at the same time, it must be observed, that the general opposition which Pelagianism encountered, and the general favour which Augustinianism met with, even in the early part of the fifth century, afford satisfactory proof that the progress of erroneous and defective views in regard to the doctrines of grace was not in the early church so rapid and so complete as it has sometimes been in modern churches. I have no doubt that, towards the middle or end of last century, a majority of the ministers of the Church of Scotland were quite prepared to have adopted a Pelagian creed, had it not been that a Calvinistic one was established by law, and that therefore the adoption of a different one might have endangered their State connection, and the enjoyment of their temporalities; while the church of the fifth century, under the guidance of Augustine, decidedly rejected Pelagianism.

The testimony, then, of the church of the first three centuries cannot be said to be very clear or explicit either for or against the doctrines of grace. But these doctrines are far too firmly established by the testimony of God's own word, and by the experience of His people, to be affected by a circumstance so insignificant as this. In place of the uncertainty and ambiguity of the testimony of the early church, with regard to the doctrines of grace, shaking our confidence in their truth, it only proves that no reliance is to be placed upon the testimony of the fathers, and of the early church, as a rule or standard in the formation of our opinions; for, finding clear evidence in Scripture that these doctrines were taught by our Lord and His apostles, and finding clear evidence

in ecclesiastical history, viewed in connection with Scripture, that they have been embraced in substance by the great body of those who, in every age and country, have given the most satisfactory evidence that they were living under the influence of personal religion, we are fully warranted in holding that the measure of the extent to which men individually or collectively have enjoyed the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and have been guided to a correct knowledge of God's revealed will, is to be tested substantially by the clearness, fulness, and firmness with which they have maintained these fundamental doctrines.

Sec. II.—*The Sufficiency of Scripture.*

In explaining the general subject of the deference due to the sentiments of the fathers, and of the church of the first three centuries, I had occasion to refer to the fact—of essential importance upon this question—that a process of declension or deterioration, both in respect of soundness of doctrine and purity of character, commencing even in the apostles' days, continued gradually to advance; and that it met with no effectual or decided check during the first three centuries, though there were occasionally individuals, such as Cyprian, who rose somewhat above its influence. This fact, when once fully established, is fatal to the authority, properly so called, of the fathers, and of the pretended catholic consent, as it is designated. The only thing that gives any plausibility to the claims set up on behalf of the fathers and of the early church, whether by Papists or semi-Papists, is the imagination—for it is nothing else—that there was a constant unbroken tradition, or handing down of sound doctrine and sound practice in regard to the government and worship of the church, carried on, according to the Papists, in the Church of Rome till the present day; but according to the Tractarians, stopping—*i.e.*, becoming somewhat corrupted—about the fifth or sixth century. When it is once ascertained that there was a gradual but unceasing change in matters of doctrine, government, and worship, this at once overturns the only ground on which any claim can be put forth on behalf of the early church to anything like authority, properly so called, in regulating our opinions or our practices, even without taking into account—what, however, is also important, and can be easily established—viz., that the change was

wholly in a direction that was not only unsanctioned by Scripture, but opposed to it.

There is, however, a remarkable exception to this constant tendency to deterioration observable during the second and third centuries, to which, before proceeding further, I think it right to direct attention: I mean the constant maintenance, during the first three centuries, of the supremacy and sufficiency of the sacred Scriptures, and the right and duty of all men to read and study them. There is no trace of evidence in the first three centuries that these scriptural principles were denied or doubted, and there is satisfactory evidence that they were steadily and purely maintained.

The fathers of that period were all in the habit of referring to the sacred Scriptures as the only real standard of faith and practice. They assert, both directly and by implication, their exclusive authority, and their perfect sufficiency to guide men to the knowledge of God's revealed will. They have all more or less explicitly asserted this, and they have asserted nothing inconsistent with it. There are men among them who have, in point of fact, given too much weight, in forming their opinions, and in regulating their conduct, to oral traditions, and to the speculations of their own reason; but, in so far as they did so, they were acting in opposition to their own professed principles,—they were disregarding or deviating from the standard which they professed to follow. Whatever may be said of their practice in some instances, we have certainly the weight of their judgment or authority, so far as it goes, in support of the great Protestant principle of the exclusive supremacy and sufficiency of the written word. This, of course, is denied by Papists and Tractarians; but we are persuaded it can be, and has been, proved, that while they appeal to the authority of the fathers and the early church in support of the authority which they ascribe to them, these parties themselves disclaim all such pretensions advanced on their behalf, and give their testimony in favour of the exclusive authority of Scripture.

We cannot enter into the detailed evidence of this position. It is adduced at length, cleared from every cavil, and established beyond all fair controversy, in the very valuable work to which I have had occasion to refer,—Goode's "Divine Rule of Faith and Practice." In the writings of the fathers of the first three centuries—and the same may be said of the writings, without excep-

tion, of many succeeding centuries—there is not the slightest trace of anything like that depreciation of the Scriptures, that denial of their fitness, because of their obscurity and alleged imperfection, to be a sufficient rule or standard of faith, which stamp so peculiar a guilt and infamy upon Popery and Tractarianism. There is nothing in the least resembling this; on the contrary, there is a constant reference to Scripture as the only authoritative standard. There are many declarations to the same effect, not indeed expressed *always* with such fulness and precision as to preclude the assaults of cavillers, just because these topics were not then subjects of controversial discussion, but sufficiently full and explicit to satisfy every impartial person as to what their views really were. They speak, indeed, often of tradition, and traditions; but then it has been conclusively proved, that by these words they most commonly meant the sacred Scriptures themselves, and the statements therein contained. They sometimes appealed, in arguing against the heretics, to the doctrines and practices which had been handed down from the apostles, especially in the churches which they themselves had founded. But besides that there was more, not only of plausibility, but of weight, in this appeal in the second century than there could be at any subsequent period, it is evident that they employed this consideration merely as an auxiliary or subordinate argument, without ever intending, by the using it, to deny, or cast into the background, the supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture; and that they employed it, not so much to prove the absolute and certain truth of their doctrines, as to disprove an allegation very often made then, as now, in theological discussion, that they were new and recently invented.

It has, indeed, been alleged by Papists,—and the allegation has been repeated by Tractarians,—that it was the heretics of the early ages who were accustomed, like Protestants, to appeal to the Scriptures; and that the orthodox fathers, in opposition to this, appealed to tradition, in the modern sense of the word. But it has been proved by evidence that is unanswerable that this allegation is wholly false in fact: it has been proved that the heretics were accustomed to decline or evade an appeal to the Scriptures, by denying their genuineness and authenticity, or by alleging that they were corrupted or interpolated; and that, besides this, they were accustomed to appeal to a secret tradition which they alleged had been handed down from the apostles, and gave their

views more fully and correctly than the received Scriptures. All this has been demonstrated, and the proof of it not only disproves the Popish allegation, but throws back upon themselves the charge of treading in the footsteps of the ancient heretics; and moreover explains fully the real import and foundation of the appeal which the orthodox fathers sometimes make to tradition as well as to Scripture. They sometimes appealed to tradition, *because* the heretics refused to acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures; they appealed to the public tradition of the apostolical churches, *because* the heretics appealed to a private tradition, alleged to have been secretly handed down from the apostles. About the end of the fourth century, in the writings of Jerome and Augustine, we find some traces of a sanction given to an appeal to tradition on points of ceremony and outward practice, though these fathers, in common with all those who preceded them, are full and explicit in asserting the supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture in all matters of faith or doctrine. We have already admitted that, long before this time, many ceremonies and practices had been introduced into the worship and government of the church which had no foundation or warrant in Scripture; but the introduction of these seems to have been based upon the alleged power of the church to decree rites and ceremonies, rather than upon any allegation that they had been authentically handed down by tradition from the time of the apostles. At any rate, we have no clear indication, till the end of the fourth century, of its having been held by any orthodox writers as a doctrine or principle, that the Scripture was not the sole and sufficient standard in matters of ceremony and ecclesiastical practice, as well as in matters of faith or doctrine; and even then the statements made to this effect by Jerome and Augustine are not very full and explicit, and are not easily reconciled with declarations they have made in other parts of their writings, in which they have recognised the exclusive supremacy and perfect sufficiency of Scripture in matters of practice as well as of opinion. The principle that the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies which have no warrant or sanction in the sacred Scriptures, as maintained and acted upon by Lutheran and Prelatic churches, we believe to be erroneous in itself, and dangerous in its application,—a principle which the word of God contains sufficient materials to disprove, and which can appeal to no more ancient authority in its support than that of Jerome and Augustine

in the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century. But still it must not be confounded with the denial of the supremacy and sufficiency of the Scripture as the only rule of faith, especially as it does not set up tradition as a rival standard, does not assume that the rites and ceremonies adopted are to be received as having come down from the apostles, and does not even impose an obligation to adopt all which have been so handed down, but merely vests in the church of any age or country a certain measure of authority to introduce some rites and ceremonies, which it may judge to be for edification.

There is one other topic of some interest and importance connected with the right appreciation and application of the word of God, in which there is no trace of deterioration or corruption during the first three, nor indeed for several subsequent centuries, and with respect to which there lies especial and pre-eminent guilt upon the apostate Church of Rome, and upon its modern imitators, the Anglican Tractarians. The fathers of the third, and even of the fourth and fifth centuries, zealously inculcated, without any exception and without any reserve, upon all the ordinary members of the church the duty, as far as they had the means and opportunity, of reading and studying the sacred Scriptures; and exerted themselves to afford to them the means of discharging this duty and enjoying this privilege, by getting the Scriptures translated into different languages, and diffusing them as widely as the circumstances of the time, when printing was unknown, admitted of it. The Tractarians, indeed, have attempted to make something of the obscure and perplexing topic called the *disciplina arcani*, as practised in the ancient church, to defend their own doctrine of *reserve* in the communication of religious knowledge, just as the Papists assign it as the reason why we find no trace of a great number of *their* doctrines and ceremonies during the first three centuries. This principle does not seem to have been originally anything else than the exercise of a reasonable discretion in the exposition of the doctrines of Christianity, with a due regard to circumstances and to men's capacities; and to have been gradually, from a foolish affectation of imitating the heathen mysteries and the practice of heathen philosophers, corrupted into something like an exoteric and esoteric doctrine. But whatever it may have been, and in whatever way it may have been practised, at different times,—and on these points our information is very meagre and

defective,—however objectionable it may have been, and however injurious may have been its consequences, the fact is unquestionable, that all the fathers continued, even in the fourth century, to urge upon all their hearers to read and study the sacred Scriptures; and that no restraint or discouragement was put upon the possession, the use, and the circulation of them.

The early church, then, down even to the Nicene and the immediately post-Nicene age, with all the errors and corruptions which had by this time infected the body of professing Christians, has escaped the special and peculiar guilt of the apostate Church of Rome, and is free from the fearful responsibility of professedly and avowedly labouring to withhold and withdraw from men that word which God has given them to be a light unto their feet and a lamp unto their path; and has transmitted a clear and unequivocal testimony in favour of the right of all men to have free access to the sacred Scriptures, and of their obligation to study them for themselves, with a view to the formation of their opinions and the regulation of their conduct.

Sec. III.—*Rights of the Christian People.*

Another topic, forming a remarkable exception to the progressive declension of the early church in point of doctrine and soundness of ecclesiastical practice, even during the first three centuries, is not one of such comprehensive magnitude and such commanding importance as that which we have already considered; still it is one of no small moment, not only in its bearing upon the right constitution and administration of the affairs of the church, but also, as experience proves, upon the interests of spiritual religion and vital godliness: I mean the steady maintenance, both in doctrine and in practice, of the right of Christian congregations to an effective and decisive voice in the appointment of their own pastors. Here, as in the former case, it is to be observed that the topic did not become a subject of formal controversial discussion during the first three centuries, nor for many centuries afterwards; and that, therefore, the testimonies upon the point are not so specific and precise as to preclude all cavilling, though quite sufficient to satisfy any honest inquirers after truth. Indeed, I know very few questions in regard to which more elaborate and unceasing efforts have been employed to silence or pervert the

testimony of Scripture and of primitive antiquity, as well as of the Reformers, than on this subject of the appointment of ministers. Papists, Prelatists, and Erastians have all laboured with unwearied zeal in attempting to overturn the evidence in support of the rights of the Christian people in the appointment of their pastors. Some Papists and Prelatists have brought no small share of learning and ingenuity to bear upon this subject, though without success; while it is more gratifying to notice that not a few even of these men have yielded to the force of truth and evidence, and have, in argument at least, abandoned the cause which their principles and position naturally inclined them to support.

The main direct and formal proofs of the doctrine and practice we have ascribed to the primitive church upon this subject, are to be found in the testimonies of Clemens Romanus, the friend and companion of the apostles, in the first century; and of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, soon after the middle of the third. These testimonies are full and satisfactory: there is not a vestige of evidence to be produced from the first three centuries that even seems to point in an opposite direction; while there are many collateral statements and incidental notices of the ordinary practice of the church to be found in the authors both of the intervening and subsequent periods, which decidedly confirm them. The testimony of Clement is very brief, but altogether conclusive: it is, that the apostles were accustomed to settle ministers—*συνευδοκησασης πασης τῆς ἐκκλησίας*—with the cordial consent of the whole church; and the statement, moreover, is adduced by Clement as a reason why the people should submit to the authority of their pastors, and not endeavour factiously to remove or expel them, since they had themselves consented to their appointment. There is no fair or even plausible method of explaining away this statement. It unequivocally implies that, at the very least, the deliberate opposition of the congregation to the person, who might have been suggested or recommended as their pastor, was held by the apostles as of itself quite a sufficient reason why his appointment should not take place. There is not the slightest ground to doubt that this practice of the apostles was uniformly observed, not only during the first three centuries, but for several centuries afterwards; and, on the contrary, there is a great deal that confirms it.

In the apostolical constitutions,—which, of course, are not the

work of Clement, to whom they have been ascribed, but which have been thought by many to have been compiled about the end of the third century, and are universally admitted to contain many interesting notices of the practices of the early church,—there is a minute account of the procedure usually adopted in the appointment of a bishop, in which precisely the same place and influence are assigned to the people as to the clergy, and in which not only the word *συνευδοκέω*, but several others of similar import,—some of them perhaps more strong and specific, such as *ἐκλέγω* and *αἰτέω*; and others of them somewhat more vague and indefinite, such as *ἐπινεύω* and *ἀρέσκω*,—are all equally applied to the joint or common acts of the clergy and the people in this matter. Blondell, who in the latter part of his great work, entitled "Apologia pro sententia Hieronymi"—usually reckoned the most learned work ever written in defence of presbytery—has collected all the evidence bearing upon this subject, and proved that the people continued generally to have a real and effective voice in the appointment of their ministers for nearly 1000 years after the foundation of the Christian church. After quoting this remarkable passage from the so-called apostolical constitutions, he adds the following inference as manifestly established by it, and confirmed by all other collateral authorities: "unde constare potest Clerumque plebemque *convenire, eligere, nominare, gratum habere, postulare, testari, annuere, rogari, consensus decretum edere,* ante Constantini Magni tempora ex æquo consuevisse."*

The testimony of Cyprian is to the same effect. He was consulted by some people in Spain, whether they might forsake or abandon their bishops who had fallen into heresy: he answered that they might; and one reason he assigns for this is, "quando ipsa plebs maxime habeat potestatem vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes, vel indignos recusandi;"† and then he proceeds to prove that this is a principle fully sanctioned by the sacred Scriptures, and based *jure divino.* These scriptural principles continued to be professed and acted on long after a large amount of error and corruption had been introduced into the church; and this, too, although the whole tendency of the changes which were going on in every other department of ecclesiastical administration ran in the opposite direction,—*i.e.*, tended to depress the influence of the people and

* P. 392. † Blondell, p. 381.

to exalt the power of the clergy, and latterly of the civil authority, until in the dark ages they, too, were brought into almost entire subjection to the Papacy. The preservation in purity of this doctrine and practice for so long a period, in opposition to the whole stream of influences which was sweeping over the church and polluting it, affords a strong confirmation of the position, that it was firmly grounded on scriptural authority and apostolic practice.

We have some traces of the system of patronage, or of something like it, in the fifth and sixth centuries, in country parishes, though not in towns, originating as it did in the practice of landed proprietors building and endowing churches for the accommodation of their dependants, and then, upon this ground, claiming some influence on the appointment of the ministers (a statement, however, let it be observed, not in the least inconsistent with Beza's account of its origin—viz., that it was concocted in Satan's kitchen). Patronage, even in its infant form, seems soon to have led, through the corruption and subserviency of the clergy, to the intrusion of ministers upon reclaiming congregations; and, in consequence, we find that in the fifth and sixth centuries enactments were passed by councils and other eminent ecclesiastical authorities against intrusion contrary to the will of the people; and it is very remarkable, and quite conclusive, that all of them contain, *in gremio*, clear and explicit proof that the principle of non-intrusion was then understood in the same sense in which we understand it,—viz. this, that the opposition of a congregation in the full enjoyment of church privileges was of itself quite a sufficient reason why the person proposed should not be settled as their pastor. These enactments were embodied in the canon law—the law of the Church of Rome—and statements and practices founded upon them continued to hold a place in the public rituals of that church till the time of the Council of Trent, when it was proposed, though not agreed to, that they should be expunged, as giving a handle to the Reformers, who had restored, not only the doctrine, but, so far as they could, the practice of the primitive church on this subject, and were all strenuous supporters of the rights of the Christian people.

Perhaps it may be asked, What do Papists, Prelatists, and Erastians, who withhold from the Christian people their lawful rights in this matter, make of these facts—of all this evidence?

The more candid among them admit that it cannot be answered; and then, if their other principles allow of it, assert that the authority of the primitive church is not binding, or that the practice followed in this respect was not one that could not be changed. The defenders of the Gallican liberties—the most respectable class of writers, along with the Jansenists, whom the modern church of Rome has produced—concur with the Greek Church in maintaining theoretically, upon grounds of Scripture and primitive antiquity, the same principles, so far as intrusion is concerned, as we do. Many of the most able and learned writers of the Church of England have admitted—and their admissions may be fairly regarded as the concessions of opponents wrung from them by the force of truth—that these were sound and primitive principles. It is sufficient to mention the names of Hooker, Bishop Wilson, Bishop Andrews, Dr Field, and Mr Bingham.*

But still it may be asked, What is said by the more bold and unscrupulous, who do not admit that the doctrine and practice of the primitive church were as we have described them? They have laboured to the best of their ability in obscuring and perverting the testimony of the primitive church, and especially by trying to show that it does not necessarily mean what they can scarcely deny that it naturally and obviously means. Cardinal Bellarmine has attempted it, and the substance of his evasion is just that which has been employed ever since, down to our own day, in all the efforts which have been made to pervert or set aside, not only the testimony of the primitive church, but that

* Dr Waddington, now Dean of Durham, and the latest Episcopal historian of the church, most fully concedes this. He says (p. 40, 2d ed.): "The choice of a successor devolved on the members of the society. In this election the people had an equal share with the presbyters and inferior clergy, without exception or distinction; and it is clear that their right in this matter was not barely testimonial, but judicial and elective." He adds, in a note to this sentence: "This is made very clear, from the comparison of much contradictory evidence by Bingham, B. iv., c. ii. There were some variations in the mode of election, according to times and circumstances, since no rule is laid down in Scripture upon the subject; but there is a great concurrence of evidence to show that no bishop was ever obtruded upon an orthodox people without their consent."

He speaks here of Bingham's comparing much contradictory evidence; but there is no contradictory evidence in ancient times upon this subject. Waddington was evidently confounding the contradictory views (referred to by Bingham) of modern authors, in regard to the import of the ancient evidence, with contradictions in the ancient evidence itself.

also of the Reformers, upon this question. The one point which they all—Papists, Prelatists, Erastians, and Infidels—labour to establish is this, that the power or influence which the testimonies quoted ascribe to the people, is merely a right of stating objections to the person proposed, of the validity of which another party is to judge; this other party, whether bishops or presbyteries, being entitled ultimately to dispose of the matter, *i.e.*, to settle the person or not, according to *their* own judgment of the validity of the people's objections; and *the one process* by which they all strive to effect it is this: they select the weakest and vaguest term which any of the authors quoted has employed in describing what the people do, or are entitled to do, in this matter; they pare down this term to the lowest sense of which, *in any circumstances or in any connection*, it is capable; and then they put forth this diluted and perverted sense of the weakest and vaguest word employed as being the true and real meaning of the far stronger, more definite, and more specific words which are also employed. Thus Cyprian, in discussing the question, happens in one sentence to speak of the necessity of the people being present, and giving their testimony. This is immediately laid hold of, and is said to mean merely, or not necessarily to mean more than, a right of stating objections; and then at once the inference is drawn, that the *power of choosing and rejecting* which Cyprian unequivocally ascribes to them must also mean this, and nothing more than this. This, of course, is in plain contravention of the most obvious principles of sound and honest interpretation; but this one artifice, variously modified, according to the ingenuity, the learning, the sense, or the courage of the men who may have been tempted to employ it (from Cardinal Bellarmine to Sir William Hamilton), is *all* that has ever been brought to bear against the clear, unequivocal, unassailable testimony, at once of the primitive church and the whole body of the Reformers, in favour of the right of the Christian people to a real, honest, and effective voice, as opposed to a mere right of stating objections, in the appointment of their pastors.

Such is the testimony of the primitive church in regard to these two important principles. Almost everything else in the profession and practice of the primitive church, with the exception of the doctrine of the Trinity, underwent changes and modifications even during the first three centuries; and the tendency of

the changes was almost universally to the worse—to a greater deviation from apostolic doctrine and practice. But, while almost everything else was changing, and changing for the worse, and while there was even a strong under-current running against the Bible and against the people, it is interesting and encouraging to see that these great Protestant principles of the supremacy and sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the rights of the Christian people in the choice of their pastors, continued to be openly and universally professed, and that no one ventured to deny them, or to propose to lay them aside. We do not, of course, attach anything like authoritative or binding weight to this consideration. We believe these great Protestant principles on the testimony of God's word; and upon that ground we would have believed them as firmly as we now do, even though, as was not improbable, they had been as much corrupted in primitive times as were some other departments of the doctrine and practice of the church. But the fact which we have established, is at least sufficient to disprove the charge of novelty, which, strange as it may seem, Papists, Prelatists, and Erastians have sometimes ventured to adduce against the holders of one or both of these principles; and considering the peculiar circumstances of the case, and the general tendency of the influences then undoubtedly at work, the professed maintenance of them for so long a period in purity, may be reasonably regarded as of itself a presumption—were presumptions needed when we have proofs—that, by divine authority and apostolic influence, they were deeply wrought into the ordinary train of men's thoughts, into the constitution of the church, and the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. Their influence was no doubt salutary and beneficial. They did not, indeed, prevent, though we are persuaded they retarded, the growing corruption of the church; and the whole subsequent history of the church proves that, whenever the Lord has been pleased to send times of reviving and refreshing, He has also brought out into prominence these great principles, where before they had been overlooked and disregarded. So it was at the period of the Reformation; and so it has been in our own church, and in our day: and most assuredly we are honoured by God to tread in the footsteps of the primitive church, and to take up an important branch of the testimony of the Reformation from Popery, when we are called upon, as we have been, by His Spirit and in His providence, to

contend for the exclusive supremacy of His word as the only law or rule by which the affairs of His church ought to be regulated, and for the right of Christian congregations to a real and important influence,—an effective and decisive voice,—in the appointment of their own office-bearers.

Sec. IV.—*Idolatry.*

We proceed to consider the testimony of the church of the first three centuries—the bearing of the information which the writers of that period afford us—on some of the topics involved in the controversies between Protestants and Papists. We have already explained the nature and bearing of the testimony of the early church upon the subject of the doctrines of grace; and these doctrines form an important part of our controversies with the Church of Rome, which has grievously corrupted them.

The adherents of the Church of Rome are the greatest admirers of the fathers, and profess implicit deference to their authority. Their controversial works abound in quotations from ancient writers, in support of all their peculiar opinions, and in opposition, as they allege, to all the doctrines of Protestantism. It is the universal practice, indeed, of Popish controversial writers to produce extracts from the writings of the fathers, very much as if they were texts of Scripture, and possessed of conclusive weight in proving or in disproving doctrines. Bellarmine, for instance, through the whole of his great work on the controversies against the heresies of the time, labours to establish all his leading positions—first, from Scripture, then from the decisions of councils; next, from the statements of the fathers; and he commonly proceeds continuously from the Scriptures to the councils, and from the councils to the fathers, just as if proofs from all these different sources were possessed, indiscriminately, of equal validity. Papists have been in the habit of boasting that all their peculiar opinions are supported by the fathers, and are confirmed by the catholic consent of the early church; and they wish this to be received as proof that, though not all originally committed to writing, or found in the canonical books, they were handed down by tradition from Christ and His apostles.

Protestants have been accustomed, on the other hand, to maintain that the fathers of the first three centuries do not coun-

tenance the leading peculiarities of the Popish system, and afford sufficient evidence that these were not then generally held by the church. This has led to a great deal of wearisome and unprofitable discussion, turning often upon the precise meaning of obscure and ambiguous phrases, of clauses and sentences frequently involved in gross darkness and inconsistency. There have been long and learned discussions between Protestants and Papists about the meaning of passages in the writings of the fathers, with respect to some of which it is more than probable that even their authors, if we could subject them to interrogation, would be unable to tell us what they meant when they wrote them! A great deal too much importance has been attached to the testimony of the fathers; and a great deal of talent and learning has been wasted in investigating the precise import of their statements. But still, as these discussions form a considerable department of theological literature, and as the adduction of authorities, in the shape of extracts from the fathers and other ancient writers, commonly enters largely into theological controversies, it may not be unprofitable to make a remark or two upon this topic.

The common practice of controversialists, and especially Popish ones, in adducing authorities from the fathers, is just to collect brief extracts from their works, which, taken by themselves, and apart from the context or scope of the passage, seem to countenance the principles they advocate. This process is, however, in its general character, unfair, and in its ordinary results, unsatisfactory and deceptive; inasmuch as experience abundantly proves that it is an easy matter to produce from the writings of almost any author, brief and garbled extracts, which, taken by themselves, would ascribe to him views which he never entertained. The objects to be aimed at, in adducing the testimony of the primitive church, or the authority of the fathers, are these two: to ascertain, first, what was the mature and deliberate judgment of the men upon the point under consideration; and, secondly, what can be clearly learned from them as to the general belief and practice of the church in the age and country in which they lived.

These are two distinct objects, which ought to be separately considered, and require distinct evidence applicable to the precise point to be established. Now, to ascertain the mature and deliberate judgment of an author upon a particular point that may be controverted, is, as experience proves, a very different thing

from producing from his writings one or two brief extracts that may have dropped from him inadvertently, or when the topic in regard to which his authority is adduced was not present to his thoughts, or was not fully and formally considered. The first thing, therefore, which in fairness ought to be attended to, in an investigation of this sort, is the question, whether or not the author ever had the precise point controverted present to his mind—whether or not he has really formed and expressed a deliberate judgment regarding it. If the precise point under consideration was never really present to his thoughts, or if it was not formally and deliberately entertained by him, then, as experience proves, it will probably be no easy matter to ascertain with certainty what his views regarding it were; and, even if they could be certainly ascertained, they would be entitled to no weight or deference as an authority, while they might still be of some value, indirectly, in ascertaining, in combination with other evidence, the views that then generally prevailed. This obvious dictate of common sense, confirmed by manifold experience, has been far too much overlooked, especially—though not exclusively—by Papists in adducing the testimony of the fathers; and, in consequence, there has been a great deal of most unprofitable and frequently most unfair discussion about the meaning of many obscure and confused passages, often terminating without leading to any very satisfactory or decisive result on either side. When Papists have adduced passages from the fathers in support of their tenets, the way in which Protestants have usually met them is by laying down and establishing such positions as these: that the words adduced do not *necessarily* require the sense which the Papists put upon them; that a careful examination of the context and scope of the passages proves that *this* was not in fact their meaning; and then particularly, that, from an examination of the whole writings of the author adduced, it can be proved that he held, not the Popish, but the Protestant view upon the point—or, at least, that he has given no clear or explicit deliverance regarding it. Protestants have fully established these positions, *or some of them*, in regard to a very large proportion of the passages commonly quoted by Papists from the writings of the early fathers; though the labour that has been spent upon this subject has been immeasurably greater than its intrinsic importance deserved, and though in this way a vast amount of learned lumber has been

bequeathed to the world, especially by divines of the Church of England.

These observations, however, apply chiefly to the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, or the Nicene age; which principally forms the debateable ground in this controversy with the Church of Rome. It is not till the fifth century, or the end of the fourth, that the Popish writers can find materials for making out a case that has anything like plausibility in support of almost any of the definite peculiarities of the Romish Church; and a large portion of what they commonly adduce from writers of these two centuries is but plausible, rather than solid. The Protestants have in the main successfully established, in regard to most of the writers of that period, one or more of the positions formerly stated. There is, however, good reason to believe that some of them have gone further than the evidence warranted, in denying that the germs or rudiments of many Popish doctrines were sown in the Nicene and immediately subsequent age, though they were not yet fully expanded and developed. But it is with the first of these centuries that we have at present to do; and here it has been established, upon a full and deliberate investigation of the whole materials, that the cause of Popery has nothing solid, scarcely anything even plausible, to rest upon; while, on the other hand, it cannot be fairly disputed that even in that early period there are plain traces of the "mystery of iniquity" being at work—indications of some of the germs of the system which was afterwards fully developed, and which operates so injuriously both on the temporal and spiritual welfare of men.

We cannot enter into a minute and detailed discussion of the various points involved in the Popish controversy, or into an investigation of the particular testimonies from early writers, which have been the subjects of so much useless discussion. We can merely state briefly and generally how the case stands. With respect to the worship paid to angels, saints, and images, and the adoration of the host, on which Protestants have based the heavy charge of idolatry against the Church of Rome, it is a matter of unquestionable certainty, and is admitted by learned Papists, that there is no authority to be produced for their doctrine and practice during the first three centuries. Thus one most important department of the mystery of iniquity is at once cut off from all pretence to the countenance and support of primitive antiquity.

There was no idolatry in the primitive church, so long as she was engaged in contending against pagan idolatry, invested with civil authority and with power to persecute; and nothing is more certain than that, in the discussions between the Christian fathers of this period and the defenders of pagan idolatry and polytheism, *the latter* had recourse to the very same sophistry in vindication of their undoubted idolatry as Papists now employ in defence of theirs, and that *the former* (the fathers) clearly and fully exposed its utter futility. It has been fully proved that the whole substance of what the Papists are accustomed to adduce, in defending themselves from the charge of being guilty of polytheism and idolatry in the worship they pay to angels, saints, and images, was brought forward by the advocates of paganism, and answered by the Christian apologists.

We have seen, indeed, that even in the third century there were plain traces of undue and extravagant honours being paid to martyrs and confessors, such as anniversaries instituted of their deaths in the case of martyrs, and conceding to their influence, in the case of confessors, a sort of right to modify what were believed to be scriptural principles in regard to penitence and admission into the communion. All this was wrong and injurious, and may perhaps be justly regarded as the germ or rudiment of the excesses and impiety that were afterwards introduced. But there is no evidence of the existence during this period of anything in doctrine or practice that was justly chargeable with being idolatrous or polytheistic. Even the addresses to these men, with which the works of some of the fathers of the fourth century abound, are rather exhibitions of foolish rhetorical declamation than prayers or invocations based upon a definite belief, such as the Church of Rome inculcates, that they were to be worshipped in any sense, or that they could exert any influence in procuring for men temporal or spiritual blessings. This, however, was a step in advance in the development of the mystery of iniquity, and led the way to the prevalence of Popish or antichristian polytheism, which became pretty general, and was introduced into the public service of the church in the course of the seventh century. It is deserving of notice, that in this way the worship of saints and angels crept into the church very gradually, without exciting much opposition, or calling forth much controversial discussion.

It was otherwise with the worship of images, to which we

shall afterwards have occasion to advert, which was established only towards the end of the eighth century, at what is called the Seventh General Council, or the Second Council of Nice, and after a severe and protracted struggle. During the first three centuries, the church was in open antagonism with paganism, and this contributed to preserve it in purity from an important class of errors. It was not till the altered circumstances of the church, taken under the protection of the civil authority, and freed from the necessity of openly contending with paganism, afforded a favourable opportunity, that Satan set himself to corrupt it, having recourse to his old expedient of fostering polytheism and idolatry, so natural to fallen man, and of overwhelming true religion under a mass of rites and ceremonies, and a crowd of external observances. It might have been supposed that, under the light of the Christian dispensation, the re-introduction of polytheism and idolatry was impracticable. But Satan knew better; and no sooner did the termination of the open contest between Christianity and paganism afford him a favourable opportunity, than he made an attempt to revive them under a Christian form,—an attempt which was crowned with the most marvellous success, and involved the great body of the professors of the Christian church for many centuries in the deepest guilt and degradation. The pagans of the first three centuries were accustomed to charge the Christians with atheism, because they had no splendid temples, no sacrifices, no images, no gorgeous dresses, no array of ceremonies and processions. This reproach, however, was in due time fully wiped away by the introduction of all the leading features of paganism, under a Christian form, indeed, but without losing anything of their essential nature, or operating less injuriously than before upon the interests of true religion. Had the primitive church borne even the slightest resemblance to the Church of Rome, the reproach of atheism on this ground never would have been adduced against it.

Sec. V.—*The Sacraments.*

One very important department of our controversy with the Church of Rome is that which respects the sacraments; and in regard to some of the doctrines and practices which may be comprehended under this head, they make somewhat more confident

and plausible appeals to antiquity than in regard to that to which we have last adverted. Protestants in general have freely conceded that the doctrine and practice of the church in regard to the sacraments was at an early period, and even during the first three centuries, considerably corrupted; but they do not admit, and it cannot be proved, that almost any of the *peculiar* doctrines of Popery had been invented during the period referred to, though the seeds of some of them had been sown, and were largely developed during the fourth, the fifth, and subsequent centuries. In the fathers of the third, and even of the second centuries, there are plain enough traces of a disposition to make great mysteries of the sacraments,—to indulge in vague and unintelligible representations of their nature and their consequences. The earliest symptoms of corruption or declension in the church are to be found, first, in the rise and growth of Prelacy; secondly, the introduction of confused and erroneous views upon the doctrines of grace; and, thirdly, of erroneous and exaggerated notions of the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments: and the progress of error and declension upon the two last topics, which are by far the most important, exerted a powerful reciprocal influence. It was mainly by the spread of erroneous and extravagant notions upon the subject of the sacraments, that the fundamental doctrines of the gospel were set aside and perverted; and it has been true ever since, in every age of the church, that both among mere formalists, who were satisfied with outward observances, and among men who had some earnestness about religion, but who were ignorant of, or opposed to, the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the sacraments, erroneously understood, have been sub-substituted for the weighter matters of the law—the sign has been substituted for the thing signified.

In the New Testament, certainly, the sacraments do not occupy any very prominent place; and nothing is said concerning them that gives any countenance whatever to what Papists and semi-Papists are accustomed to assert concerning their nature, objects, and results. Baptism is, indeed, said to save us, and men who receive the Lord's Supper are said to partake of the body and blood of Christ; but there are abundant materials in Scripture to prove that these outward ordinances are but signs and seals of spiritual blessings, which may, indeed, be said ordinarily to *apply* these blessings, but the efficacy of which in applying them is

wholly dependent upon the presence and operation of faith in the recipient; while faith, wherever it exists, confers and applies all spiritual blessings irrespective of any external ordinances whatever. The symbolical character of the sacraments was soon more or less obscured or lost sight of, and some traces of the Popish principles of the *opus operatum*—*i.e.*, some inherent power or efficacy of the ordinances themselves, irrespective of the faith and character of the recipient—began to make their appearance, which, in the progress of ignorance and corruption of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, were gradually more and more developed.

The first step in the progress of error in this matter was a confounding, more or less thoroughly, of the sign with the thing signified; and this gradually expanded into an ascription to the sacraments of a power of producing or conferring, by something like an inherent efficacy of their own, what they merely represented or symbolized. Before the end of the third century, the fathers were accustomed to speak of baptism as being at once the remission of sin and the renovation of the moral nature; and though this mode of speaking was originally adopted *upon the assumption*, that the faith which unites men to Christ, and is the instrumental cause of justification, and, in the full sense of the word, of moral renovation, existed, and was expressed or embodied in the reception of baptism, yet this consideration was gradually lost sight of, and they began to talk as if baptism of itself necessarily implied all this. Hence baptism came at length to comprehend, and thereby to shut out or abolish, so far as the professed doctrinal system was concerned, the great fundamental principle of justification by faith, and to be received as a substitute for that great change of moral nature indispensable to salvation, which is effected by the Holy Spirit through the belief of the truth. It is a very remarkable thing, that the great doctrine of justification by faith excited no formal controversy in the church, and can scarcely be said to have been even fully expounded and enforced, from the time of Paul to that of Luther. Satan's policy was to undermine it, rather than to assail it openly and directly; and this object was pursued and effected chiefly by throwing the doctrine of justification, in the scriptural sense, and according to the scriptural views of it, into the background, by giving prominence to the sacraments, and by encouraging extravagant notions of their nature and efficacy. It was chiefly baptism that was

employed for this purpose; and, accordingly, there are few subjects in regard to which the Papists can produce from the fathers a more plausible array of testimonies to countenance their tenets than in regard to this sacrament. Not that either the principles of the *opus operatum*, or the absolute necessity of baptism to salvation, can be shown to have been generally and distinctly held by the leading writers of the third century, though the latter was maintained explicitly by many before the end of the fourth; but that considerable advances were made towards these errors, and still more towards what has since been called *baptismal regeneration*,—an error, the maintenance of which may be confidently regarded as indicating an entire ignorance of the fundamental principles of the gospel.

It was common in the third century, and even in the fourth, for men who professed to have been converted to the faith of the gospel to delay their baptism till they thought that death was at hand; and this they did under the influence of a notion which then prevailed, that baptism conferred the remission of all past sins, and thus, as it were, cleared off all scores, and prepared them for death and heaven. This erroneous and most dangerous notion was not, indeed, directly countenanced by the doctors of the church, but there must have been something in the common mode of stating and explaining the nature and efficacy of baptism which naturally led to the adoption of it. The practice of delaying baptism gradually gave way before the doctrine of the absolute necessity of baptism to salvation both in infants and adults, which had become prevalent before the end of the fourth century. But the Church of Rome still teaches, both that baptism cleanses from all past sins,—freeing infants from all original sin,—and that it is indispensably necessary to salvation; and she can produce fully as good authority from the fathers for these as for any of the other errors by which she has corrupted the doctrines of the gospel.

The Lord's Supper forms a very prominent feature in the system of the Church of Rome. Everything about this ordinance she has most grossly corrupted. She has explained and applied it in such a way as virtually to overturn or neutralize the fundamental principles of gospel truth,—the great doctrines of the vicarious atonement of Christ, justification by faith, and sanctification by the Spirit of God; and she has embodied in her system

of doctrine and practice concerning it, her principal provisions for crushing the exercise of all mental independence and freedom of thought, and for subjecting the understandings, consciences, and the purses of men to the control of her priesthood. She has laboured with unwearied zeal and activity, to procure for her doctrines and practices upon this important subject the countenance and support of the primitive church, but without success. One of the most elaborate and voluminous controversies, in the form of a single combat, that ever took place, turns upon this question, —the controversy between those two noble combatants, Arnauld the celebrated Jansenist, and Claude the great champion of the French Protestant churches in the latter part of the seventeenth century. In that great controversy on the perpetuity of the faith of the church concerning the Eucharist, as it was called, everything bearing upon this topic was searched out, and applied with great ability and ingenuity on both sides. The practical result of this controversy concerning the Eucharist is very much the same as that which has been stated in regard to baptism. The Church of Rome has nothing solid, and little that is even plausible, to stand upon during the first three centuries,—nothing but a tendency manifested to talk in pompous and mystical language about the solemnity and efficacy of the ordinance, and to fail in distinguishing very accurately between the sign and the thing signified. It has been proved that the progress of obscure, unintelligible, and extravagant phraseology upon this subject advanced, but that it was not till the ninth century that we have any clear and unequivocal indication of the modern Popish doctrine of transubstantiation. It is very certain that, during the first three centuries, there was no adoration of the host; no altar, and no proper sacrifice; and that, of course, the mass, that great idol of Popery, was utterly unknown.

With respect to transubstantiation, or the alleged conversion of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ, on which the whole doctrine and practice in regard to the mass is founded, they have nothing to adduce from this period in support of it, except that the fathers call the bread and wine, as Scripture does, the body and blood of Christ,—the question, however, remaining in both cases to be determined, whether such statements mean, and were intended to mean, that the one was actually converted, *by a change of substance*, into the other; or merely that the one

was a figure, or symbol, or emblematical representation of the other. There is, as we have said, a good deal of confusion and obscurity in the language occasionally employed upon this subject, quite enough to prove the utter unfitness of the fathers to be authorities or guides; but there are sufficient materials to prove that not only for three, but for more than twice three centuries, though the obscurity and confusion of the language employed were increasing, the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation had not been broached.

Papists usually make this matter of transubstantiation the leading instance of a principle which they are in the habit also of applying to other topics,—that, viz., of the impossibility of a new doctrine being invented and broached subsequently to the time of the apostles, without attracting attention and calling forth opposition. We deny the soundness of the principle as a rule or standard for judging of the truth of doctrines. The perfection and sufficiency of the Scriptures prove that it is quite enough to show from the word of God, that from the beginning it was not so; while the history of the church suggests many considerations which evince that the principle, if true at all, is true only to a very limited extent. But, irrespective of all this, Protestants do not hesitate to undertake, in regard to this particular topic of transubstantiation, to prove that there was a long and gradual process of preparation for its fabrication in the growing corruption and declension of the church, and in the growing confusion and obscurity of the language employed upon this subject; that it was not till the ninth century that the doctrine of transubstantiation was clearly and unequivocally developed; that, notwithstanding the peculiarly favourable circumstances in which it was broached, from the corruption and ignorance which then prevailed, it did meet with decided opposition, and was not finally established as the public and recognised doctrine of the church for several centuries afterwards. Gieseler, in his very valuable "Text-Book of Ecclesiastical History," states this point with his usual brevity, accuracy, and comprehensiveness, in this way, supporting his statement, as usual, with an abundance of satisfactory quotations and references: "Paschasius Radbertus, a monk, and from A.D. 844–851 abbot, of Corbey (A.D. 865), first reduced the fluctuating expressions long in use concerning the body and blood of Christ in the holy supper, to a regular theory of transubstantiation. His

doctrine, however, met with very considerable opposition. Rabanus Maurus rejected it entirely; Ratramnus" (known also by the name of Bertram), "in the opinion for which he was called upon by the emperor, and which has been often erroneously attributed to John Scotus, declared decidedly against it, and all the most respected theologians of the day adhered to the more reasonable view. Still this mystical doctrine, which had probably existed for a long time amongst the common people, though never before theologically developed, was not without its advocates, and it was easy to foresee that it needed only a time of greater darkness and ignorance, such as soon followed, to become prevalent." *

Sec. VI.—*The Papal Supremacy.*

We cannot enter upon the numerous innovations and corruptions in doctrine, government, worship, and discipline, which have been obtruded upon the professedly Christian community by the Church of Rome. The great mass of them have no countenance, and scarcely pretend to have any countenance, from the fathers of the first three centuries; and when we have once got beyond this period, no inferior antiquity, alleged to attach to any doctrine or practice, can be held to afford even the slightest presumption that it had an apostolic origin; and, therefore, all discussions about the origin of doctrines and practices, which first appeared in a later age, possess a merely historical interest, and have no real bearing upon the question of even the probability of their being true or binding. Romanists have been much perplexed as to what course they ought to take in order to procure an apostolic sanction for their innumerable innovations. Some assert that all the doctrines and practices of the modern Church of Rome have existed in the church from the time of the apostles downwards, and endeavour to account for the want of any trace of them in the remains of ancient times, by the *disciplina arcani*, or the alleged habit of the ancient church to conceal some of her tenets and ceremonies. Others abandon altogether the attempt to establish the antiquity of matters of outward order and discipline, and found a great deal upon the erroneous and dangerous principle,—which has also re-

* Vol. ii., pp. 45–48 of Cunningham's translation; and vol. ii., pp. 284–290 of Davidson's.

ceived the sanction of the Church of England,—that the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies.

But the difficulty remains still in regard *to doctrines*, in the more limited sense of the word, which cannot be established from Scripture. Now, in regard to this subject, their general principles about the unwritten, as distinguished from the written, word, would seem, in all fairness, to tie them down to the necessity of proving a catholic consent with respect to all doctrines which they impose upon men's faith,—*i.e.*, of proving, by competent evidence, that they have been generally held by the church at large in every age since the apostles' days. But though this is a burden which their professed general principles manifestly impose upon them, and though they have made great efforts to sustain it, not only by means of sophistry and misrepresentation, but of forgery and interpolation, they have found the task impracticable. It has been proved that there are not a few doctrines taught by the Church of Rome, with respect to which not only no proof, but no presumption exists, that they were known at all during the first three or four centuries. They rather shrink from asserting openly and explicitly the right of the church,—infallible though she be,—to form new articles of faith confessedly not delivered to the church by Christ and His apostles, and imposing them upon men's consciences; and, therefore, they have devised two expedients by which they think they can evade the necessity of maintaining this startling claim, though, in fact, they are, both of them, just assertions of it in a somewhat disguised and mitigated form. The first is, that in consequence of the difficulties attaching to the investigation of this catholic consent, as a historical question or matter of fact, they ascribe to the existing church—*i.e.*, to the Romish authorities for the time being—the right of determining finally and infallibly, whether any particular doctrines that may have been broached, have or have not been handed down in the church from apostolic times. But as they could not fail to see that men could not easily be persuaded to believe an affirmative declaration to this effect made by the existing church, unless she had some evidence to produce of the antiquity of the doctrine, they have been led to have recourse to what is the favourite expedient now-a-days, and is known as the Theory of Development. It is based upon a principle or idea, the truth of which is admitted by Protestants, viz., that the church is warranted, and may be called upon, accord-

ing to the circumstances in which she is placed, and especially the errors against which she may have to contend, to bring out more fully, and to define more precisely, the doctrines which the apostles delivered to the church; and then they add to this sound principle the unsound one, that the church—*i.e.*, the Church of Rome—has the right of authoritatively determining what tenets ought to be received as true and sound developments of apostolic doctrine, and what ought to be rejected as errors or corruptions; and from all this they deduce the inference, that what Protestants call Romish innovations in doctrine are true and just developments of doctrines which indeed were contained in substance in those taught by the apostles, orally or in writing; but were not developed, because there was no call for this till the broaching of errors required it. And while they rest this conclusion, and the truth of the particular doctrines which it respects, mainly upon the right of the church to develop and define, they also do their best, in regard to each particular doctrine, to bolster it up by any evidence they can derive from perverting Scripture and the testimonies of antiquity.

It is this theory of development that is advocated in Dr Newman's work, giving an account of his reasons for joining the Church of Rome. He virtually abandons the theory of tradition and catholic consent, about which he and his followers used to prate so much.* The way in which true Protestants should meet it is plain enough. They will investigate the true and honest meaning of development, as distinguished from mere invention or fabrication, and mark out the limits and conditions of the principle fairly and judiciously, so as to guard against tenets being called developments of previously existing and professed doctrines, when they are manifestly new inventions, which had previously

* The Tractarians, who still adhere to the Establishment, have been greatly puzzled as to how they should dispose of their late leader's Theory of Development; and, indeed, I do not know that any one of them has yet ventured to grapple with it. The orthodoxy of Newman's Theory of Development has given rise to a controversy among Romanists themselves. Cardinal Wiseman has adopted and defended it.—*Dublin Review* for Dec. 1845 and Dec. 1847; *vide* Dr Wordsworth's Letters to M. Gondon, on the Distinctive Character of the Church of Rome, Let. i., especially pp. 13 and 31 of 3d edition, 1848. It was opposed by Brownson, with the alleged sanction of American authorities; *vide Bulwark*, vol. ii., pp. 159 and 216.

no basis to rest upon; they will deny, and, if needful, disprove, the pretended right of the Church of Rome to decide authoritatively and infallibly as to what tenets are true and just developments of previously existing doctrines, and what are new inventions and corruptions; they will insist that all these questions be decided by the sacred Scriptures, interpreted in the exercise of common sense; and then, having thus cleared the ground, they will adduce direct proof, as has been often done, that all the peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome are opposed to Scripture and primitive antiquity, or at least are wholly unsanctioned by them; and that in *either* case, men are not only warranted, but bound to reject them.

The causes which have led to the promulgation of this theory of development in the present day, are manifestly these: first, that in consequence of the profound investigations into the history of doctrines or dogmas, as it is commonly designated, which have recently taken place in Germany, it had become palpably absurd and impossible to maintain any longer the old Romish position, that all the doctrines of the Council of Trent could be traced back by anything like a plausible chain of evidence to the apostolic, or to any portion of the ante-Nicene, age; and, secondly, that the theory was in substance identical with that of the infidel Rationalists, who represent the Christian system, as taught by Christ and His apostles, as containing, indeed, some germs or rudiments of truth, but as very defective and imperfect, and admitting of great improvement; and that the adoption of it was thus a specimen of Rome's skilful adaptation to the prevailing sentiments and tendencies of the age; while Satan, who must always be taken into account as an influential party in all Romish schemes, has the advantage of men being, by the exposition of this theory of development, led into infidelity, or confirmed in it, if they should not be convinced of the right of the Church of Rome to determine authoritatively on the legitimacy of alleged developments.

When we consider the various shifts to which the defenders of the Church of Rome have been thus obliged to have recourse, in discussing the general subject of the fathers and antiquity, and recollect what we have already adduced as to the testimony of the first three centuries on some of the leading peculiarities of Popery, it can excite no surprise that some of the most eminent Popish controversialists — as, for example, Cardinal Perron and the Jesuit Petavius, than whom the Church of Rome has produced

no men more eminent, at once for erudition and controversial skill—have virtually given up the first three centuries, and have tried to take their stand, as the Tractarians do, upon the fourth and fifth centuries. Upon all these grounds, we do not intend to dwell at any greater length upon the bearing of the testimony of the first three centuries upon the points involved in the Popish controversy, with this exception, that we mean to make some observations upon the supremacy of the Pope, or the claim which he puts forth to be acknowledged and obeyed as the vicar of Christ upon earth, and the monarch of the universal church. This may be regarded as being in some respects the great leading characteristic of Popery, by which it is distinguished from all other professedly Christian communities, whether more pure or more corrupt.

We do not dwell upon the differences of opinion existing among Romanists themselves, as to what the Pope's supremacy implies—as to the kind and degree of power and authority that ought to be ascribed to him—although their internal controversies upon this subject afford important arguments against the whole of the Papal claims. There is a very considerable gradation of opinion upon this topic, even among men who have lived and died in the communion of the Romish Church—from those who ascribe to the Pope, as such, personal infallibility in all matters of doctrine and even of fact, and direct jurisdiction in temporal matters, down to some of the extreme defenders of the Gallican liberties, as they are called, who have represented him as being just the patriarch of the West, occupying, indeed, the highest place, both in point of rank and power, among the bishops of the Western Church, but not invested with any very large measure of authority or jurisdiction, to be exercised according to his own discretion, and independently of the synods or councils in which he might preside, and of the canons already received by the church. It is admitted, however, that almost all Romanists, including even most of the defenders of the Gallican liberties, maintain the supremacy of the Pope, as implying that he is invested with some measure of authority or jurisdiction over the whole church of Christ. Bossuet indeed, and other defenders of the Gallican liberties,* object to the position that the Pope has the power of ruling or governing

* Defensio Declar. Cler. Gal., P. i., Lib. i., c. ii. iii.

the universal church, inasmuch as this might be held to imply that he was entitled to rule, and, of course, was superior to an œcumenical council, which is the universal church representative, —a doctrine which the Gallican church has always strenuously opposed; and those of them who might hesitate to deny that the Council of Florence, in the fifteenth century, which ascribed to the Pope the right of ruling and governing the universal church, was œcumenical, and of course infallible, endeavour to get rid of its decree upon this subject, by saying—rather a nice distinction —that the universal church, which the Pope is declared by the council to have the power of ruling and governing, is to be understood, not *collectively*, as comprehending the whole church in the mass, or an œcumenical council as representing it, but only *distributively*, as including all the faithful, and all the different churches separately considered, which may be spread over the earth. But we need not enter into details as to the differences among Romanists with respect to the extent either of the Pope's spiritual or temporal supremacy, and must just regard it as implying in general, and by almost universal admission, a right to exercise jurisdiction or authoritative control over *all* the professing people and churches of Christ, if not over *the universal church.* Although it cannot, perhaps, be proved that the Church of Rome, as such, is committed to any precise definition of the kind or degree of power implied in the Pope's supremacy,—the meaning, as well as the authority of the decree of the Council of Florence, which looks most like a formal definition of anything that can be produced upon this point, being a subject of controversial discussion among themselves,—yet it can be proved that she is committed to this position, that it is indispensable to the salvation of any human being that he be subject to the Bishop of Rome: for this startling doctrine was not only inculcated in bulls issued by Pope Boniface VIII. and Pope Leo X., but confirmed by two of the Lateran Councils; and Bellarmine, accordingly, does not hesitate to say that the supremacy of the Pope involves the sum and substance of Christianity:—"De qua re agitur, cùm de primatu Pontificis agitur? brevissime dicam, de summa rei Christianæ. Id enim quæritur, debeat ne Ecclesia diutius consistere, an verò dissolvi, et concidere? Quid enim aliud est quærere, an oporteat, ab ædificio fundamentum removere, a grege pastorem, ab exercitu imperatorem, solem ab astris, caput a corpore, quàm an oporteat ædifi-

cium ruere, gregem dissipari, exercitum fundi, sydera obscurari, corpus jacere?"*

If it be indeed true that the Bishop of Rome is the foundation of the Christian church, the pastor of the whole flock of Christ, the commander of the whole Christian army, the sun among the stars, the head of the body, it must be of some importance that individuals and churches should know this, and be suitably affected by the relation which he holds to them. If he be the vicar of Christ, and authorized *by Him* to govern His church—and upon no lower ground than this can the claims he puts forth be even entertained—he must produce Christ's commission, he must show Christ's authority for all the powers he claims; and this he professes to do, adducing Scripture proofs in support of his supremacy. It is true, indeed, that (as has been conclusively proved) these claims were never explicitly put forth in their modern dimensions, as resting upon a scriptural basis, till about the middle of the fifth century; and this upon general, and much more upon Popish, principles, furnishes a very strong presumption against their validity. But still, every claim that professes to rest upon scriptural authority is entitled to a deliberate examination, at whatever time or in whatever circumstances it may have been advanced.

The positions on which the Pope's claim to supremacy over the Christian church is based, may be reduced to two, though they may also be expanded into a larger number. The defenders of the Pope's supremacy are bound, and do indeed undertake, to establish these two positions—first, that Christ invested Peter with a primacy or superiority, not only of rank, honour, or dignity, but of actual authority or jurisdiction, over the rest of the apostles, and over all His church, so that he, by Christ's appointment, became their rightful ruler or governor, he being entitled to exercise authority over them, and they being bound to obey him; and that this supremacy was not personal to Peter, but was to be enjoyed by an unbroken succession of individuals to the end of the world; and, secondly, that, by Christ's authority and direction, Peter became and died Bishop of Rome, and transmitted to all his successors *in that see* the same authority or jurisdiction over the church which Christ had conferred upon him. Unless *both* these positions can be established, and

* Præf. de Rom. Pontif.

established from Scripture, the Pope's claim to supremacy must manifestly fall to the ground.

Now, it is evident, even at first sight, that the important points embodied in the second of these positions do not admit of being established by scriptural evidence. There is manifestly nothing in Scripture which, with any plausibility, can be advanced in support of them; and, indeed, the Papists scarcely venture to allege that there is, and usually under this head have recourse to general considerations, to far-fetched inferences, to vague probabilities, and mere human authorities, instead of specific Scripture proofs. It is otherwise, however, with the first position, or at least the first part of it, which asserts that a supremacy over the other apostles, and over the whole church, was vested in Peter by his Master. In support of this they do profess to produce positive Scripture proofs, and these are not altogether destitute of a certain measure of *prima facie* plausibility, especially our Lord's address to Peter after the apostle had confessed his faith in Him as the Son of God, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build My church." We cannot enter upon anything like a minute and detailed examination of the import of particular statements of Scripture. It is enough at present to observe that the Papists are, by their own principles, precluded from basing upon this text a proof of the supremacy of Peter, inasmuch as they cannot produce in support of their interpretation of it the consent of the fathers; nay, inasmuch as it is certain that a great proportion of the most eminent of the fathers, even in the fourth century, understood the rock on which the church was to be built, to mean, not the person, but the faith of Peter,—the great truth which he had just confessed, and which is evidently the foundation and main topic of the whole conversation. This is an interpretation which certainly cannot be disproved, and which is rendered all the more probable by the considerations, that Christ is represented in Scripture as being alone properly the rock on which the church is built; while, in the improper or subordinate sense in which alone any creature could be said to be the rock or foundation of the church, the designation is elsewhere applied equally to all the apostles, who were also, all of them, subsequently invested with the power of the keys, with the power of binding and loosing, in the same terms as Peter was.

There is no ground in the New Testament for believing that

Peter was invested by Christ with jurisdiction or authority over the other apostles and over the church; and there is no ground there for believing that he assumed or exercised any such jurisdiction. On the contrary, there is much declared and recorded in the New Testament which tends to prove—first, in general, that there was no proper superiority or subordination among the apostles, as rulers and governors of the church; and, secondly, and more specifically, that Peter was not invested with any jurisdiction over the rest of them, and that,—notwithstanding his eminent qualities, his distinguished services, and the signal honour which Christ put upon him by making him so prominent an instrument of extensive good,—he was not then regarded and treated as the vicar of Christ and the ruler of the church. With respect to the second part of the first position—viz., that the supremacy vested in Peter over the apostles, supposing it proved, was to be enjoyed by an unbroken succession of individuals in all future ages—it is scarcely pretended that there is any direct specific evidence in Scripture in support of it. It is a mere inference, resting, at best, upon vague general probabilities, and may be regarded as fairly precluded by the absurdity which it implies in its very first stage,—viz., that Peter's immediate successor must have been the lord and master of the apostles who survived him, including the apostle John, who survived all the rest. The dignity of Prince of the Apostles, which the Papists assign to Peter, if it ever existed, may have, for anything that can be shown, disappeared with the apostolic office.

It is, however, the second of the positions on which the supremacy of the Pope is founded—viz., that Peter, by Christ's orders, became and died Bishop of Rome, and transmitted to all his successors in that see the same jurisdiction over the church which Christ had conferred on him—that comes more immediately within our province. Unless this position be also thoroughly established, nothing whatever has been done towards proving the Pope's supremacy; and unless it be established from Scripture, there can rest upon no man an obligation to admit it. Now, it is perfectly manifest that there is nothing whatever in Scripture *that has even the appearance of bearing upon any of the points involved in it;* and this single consideration is conclusive against the whole claim. If there be any doctrines which we are required to believe as resting upon God's authority, and if these doctrines are

in some measure involved as to the grounds on which they rest in matters of fact, we must have these matters of fact recorded in Scripture itself, else they can be of no force or validity in establishing a *jus divinum*. The informations of ecclesiastical history may be of some use and weight in establishing the true meaning and import of some scriptural statements, as we formerly showed in the case of the heresies of the Docetæ and the Cerinthians; but this has no analogy with the present case: for here the facts alleged are made the real and the sole basis of doctrines, which it is admitted are not, as doctrines, taught in Scripture. Conceding, for the sake of argument, first, that Peter was invested with jurisdiction over the whole church; and, secondly, that he was to have a continued series of successors in the possession and exercise of this universal headship,—neither of which positions assuredly can be proved; yet all this avails nothing whatever towards establishing the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, unless and until it be *further* proved that Christ intended *them* to be His successors in this universal headship. Now, as confessedly it is not stated in Scripture, either directly or by implication, that the Bishops of Rome were to be Peter's successors in the exercise of this supremacy, Papists have been constrained to admit that the only, the indispensable medium of probation by which they must establish this link in their argument, is the matter of fact that Peter became Bishop of Rome, and continued to occupy that see till his death. Even if this were proved, it would be no sufficient ground of itself for the important and weighty conclusion based upon it, as we would still be entitled to demand distinct and specific proof for the connection between the facts and the Popish inference drawn from them; *i.e.*, proof that Peter's becoming and dying Bishop of Rome was *intended by Christ* as an indication of His purpose that all the subsequent Bishops of Rome were to be His vicars on earth. Yet, on the other hand, it is manifest that unless this can be proved, and proved from Scripture, the whole argument for a *jus divinum*, or scriptural proof in support of the Pope's supremacy, at once sinks in the dust.

Accordingly, we find that Bellarmine is involved in great confusion and perplexity, and is constrained to make some important concessions in regard to this branch of his argument. He thinks he has proved—and we are at present conceding this, for the sake of argument—that Peter was appointed by his Master to be the

ruler and governor of His church, and even that Christ intended that Peter should have a perpetual series of successors in the exercise of the same jurisdiction. But he admits that he is *further* bound to prove that Peter became Bishop of Rome by Christ's orders, and died there by His appointment in the exercise of that office, and that this was intended to indicate that his successors in the see of Rome were also to be his successors in the government of the universal church; and when these points came up before him as positions to be proved, he saw, and was constrained to admit, that nothing like scriptural authority or a *jus divinum* could be pleaded in support of them. Having produced a testimony from one of the forged decretal-epistles of the Popes,—a series of documents acknowledged by himself in other parts of his works to be forgeries,—and two similar testimonies from Athanasius and Ambrose, fathers of the fourth century, to the effect that Peter came to Rome, and suffered martyrdom there, by Christ's orders, he founds this conclusion upon them, having nothing else on which to rest it: "Non est improbabile, (not a very confident statement) Dominum etiam apertè jussisse, ut sedem suam Petrus ita figeret Romæ, ut Romanus episcopus absolutè ei succederet." It is, then, on a mere *non improbabile* that he bases this important step in the argument,—viz., that Christ directed Peter to become Bishop of Rome, that He might thus indicate who were to be his successors in the government of the church. Again he admits, that *perhaps* "forte non est de jure divino, Romanum pontificem, ut Romanum pontificem, Petro succedere;" while, at the same time, he maintains that, though *perhaps* it is not of divine right, yet it pertains to the Catholic faith,—meaning by this distinction, that, though *perhaps* it cannot be proved from Scripture—the only source from which a proof, valid in the estimation of Protestants, his opponents, can be derived—yet it can be proved by arguments, the validity of which Catholics, as such—*i.e.*, Romanists—are bound by their principles to admit,—a point with which we need not concern ourselves. And the ground of this position he explains, repeating again the same important concession, though with evident marks at once of caution and trepidation, in this way: "Etsi autem Romanum pontificem succedere Petro, non habeatur expressè in Scripturis, tamen succedere *aliquem* Petro, deducitur evidenter ex Scripturis; illum autem esse Romanum pontificem habetur ex traditione Apostolica Petri, quam traditionem Concilia

generalia, Pontificum decreta, et Patrum consensus declaravit."* Thus it appears that, after a good deal of shuffling and hesitation, the concession at length comes clearly out, that for anything beyond these two positions—which, even though proved or admitted, are manifestly and confessedly far from being sufficient of themselves to establish the doctrine of the Pope's supremacy,—viz., first, that Peter was invested with supremacy or jurisdiction over the church; and, secondly, that it was Christ's intention that Peter should have a series of successors in the office of universal monarch, and in the exercise of the jurisdiction which it implies—its advocates are dependent entirely upon general councils, the decrees of Popes, and the consent of the fathers. No materials derived from these sources could establish a *jus divinum*, even if more full and relevant than any which Papists have been able to produce from them. And, accordingly, most subsequent Popish controversialists have taken warning from Bellarmine's perplexity upon this point, while they have failed to imitate his candour, and have usually omitted to bring forward this branch of the argument, as if it were unnecessary for the establishment of their cause.

In this argument about the succession of the Popes to Peter, and the nature and amount of the evidence in support of Christ's having directed him to fix his see at Rome, and having intended *thereby* to indicate that his successors in that see were also to be his successors in the government of the universal church, Bellarmine assumes it as proved that Peter had been at Rome, that he became bishop of that church, and died in the occupation of that office; and it is important to remember that, essential as the proof of these matters of fact is to the establishment of the Pope's supremacy, there is not a vestige of evidence in support of them in Scripture, while no facts that enter into the necessary proof of a *jus divinum* can be admitted upon any lower authority. Here is a fatal defect which cannot be repaired. The general conclusion to which an examination of all the materials in Scripture bearing upon the point would lead, is the improbability that Peter ever was at Rome; while the common Popish averment, that he held the Roman see for twenty-five years after having been for seven years Bishop of Antioch, may be fairly regarded as disproved by

* De Rom. Pont., Lib ii., cap. xii.

Scripture;—and yet this averment forms a portion of the earliest authority we have for Peter being Bishop of Rome at all,—viz., a statement of Jerome's in the end of the fourth century.*

Though there is no certainty, no evidence in Scripture, that Peter ever was at Rome, and though the presumption from Scripture is rather against it, yet there is a considerable amount of historical evidence, of ordinary human testimony, that he suffered martyrdom in that city; and though, even as a mere question of historical evidence, it cannot be said to be thoroughly established, yet Protestants have generally admitted it as being, upon the whole, most probable. As to the position that he was Bishop of Rome, in the modern sense of the word, there is not a vestige of anything like evidence in support of it in Scripture. On the contrary, there is much in Scripture to prove—first, that no apostle became, in the modern sense, bishop of any particular church,—a thing as absurd, as Dr Isaac Barrow says, "as if the king should become Mayor of London, or the Bishop of London should become Vicar of Pancras;" and, secondly, that no such functionaries as modern bishops existed in the apostolic age. This second position goes to the root of the matter, while it suggests the consideration that the firmest basis on which to rest our assaults upon Popery, so far as church government is concerned, is the Presbyterianism of the New Testament. There is, then, no Scripture evidence that Peter was invested with jurisdiction or authoritative control over the other apostles and the whole church, or that he was to have a series of successors in the exercise of this jurisdiction; there is no Scripture proof that he ever was at Rome, or held the office of bishop of that church; and, lastly, there is no indication in Scripture that it was the mind and will of Christ that the Bishops of Rome should succeed him in the possession of any of the powers and prerogatives which he enjoyed. ALL these positions must be established, and established from Scripture, in order to lay the foundation of a *jus divinum* in pleading for the Pope's supremacy; while not one of them can be proved from the word of God, and most of them can be disproved by conclusive scriptural evidence. Surely Luther was well entitled to his joke, when, adverting to the entire want

* *Vide* Kipling's Reply to Dr Troy, in The Churchman Armed, vol. ii., pp. 270–274.

of Scripture evidence for this sweeping and presumptuous claim, he put this question, "Where is it written, except perhaps at Rome, in the church of St Peter's, in the chimney with a bit of coal?"

I have still to advert to the testimony of the first three centuries upon the claim of the Bishops of Rome to supremacy over the whole Church,—a claim which, as formerly explained, implies, and is based upon, these two positions: first, that Peter was invested by Christ with authority or jurisdiction over the other apostles and over the whole church; and, secondly, that by Christ's directions he became, and died, Bishop of Rome, and transmitted to his successors in that see the jurisdiction over the whole church which he himself possessed. If such a right had been conferred upon Peter and the Bishops of Rome, this must have been well known to the church, and their knowledge of it must have appeared palpably in their statements and proceedings. This is so evident from the nature of the case, as not to require illustration. A negative argument from antiquity—if there be, indeed, materials on which to rest it—must evidently be at once legitimate and powerful in opposition to Papal claims; *i.e.*, in other words, if there be no clear traces in primitive antiquity of Peter and the Bishops of Rome claiming this supremacy, and having the exercise of it conceded to them, this must be, to say the least, a very strong presumption that no such right was ever conferred upon them.

Accordingly, the defenders of the Papal supremacy have commonly laid down this position, and have virtually admitted that it was necessary for them to prove it in order to make out their case, —viz., that ever since the formation of the Christian church, the Bishops of Rome, as Peter's successors, have claimed and exercised jurisdiction over the whole flock of Christ. They have not been able to produce anything whatever in support of this position that has even the appearance of evidence, though they have certainly displayed the most extraordinary diligence and ingenuity in distorting and perverting the statements of early writers, and the facts and incidents of ancient history, in order to extract from them something in support of their claims. Every phrase or expression that has ever dropped from any ancient writer in commendation of Peter or of the Church of Rome, or of any of its bishops; every instance in which the Bishops of Rome were applied to by any

one for advice or assistance; every case in which they interfered in the discussion or arrangement of any subject, and seem to have contributed in any way, or to any extent, to its adjustment;—everything of this sort is put down as a proof, not of the possession of excellence or of influence, but of proper jurisdiction or authority over the church. But as it may be confidently asserted that not only there is nothing in Scripture which asserts or implies that Peter exercised, and was recognised as entitled to exercise, jurisdiction over the other apostles and the church at large, but much which shows that no such right was then imagined to exist, so the same assertion may be made with equal confidence in regard to the first three centuries, and for a considerable period beyond them.

We have shown that Bellarmine was forced to admit that the position, essential to the establishment of the Papal supremacy—viz., that Christ, by arranging that Peter should die Bishop of Rome, *intended* to indicate His will that his successors in that see should also succeed him in the government of the whole church—could not be proved from Scripture, and therefore was not based *jure divino;* while he contended that it was founded upon what he called "the apostolic tradition of Peter." By this, of course, he meant, first, that Peter himself had made known to the church that this was his Master's will; and, secondly, that the knowledge of this important fact—viz., that he had done so—rested upon tradition. He then proceeds to specify more particularly what proof there was of this tradition, on which so much depended; and therefore, in support of it, cites general councils, the decrees of Popes, and the consent of fathers; and he goes on to produce proofs from these different sources.

As to the general councils, none were held during the first three centuries; so that their authority by itself, as a proof of apostolical tradition, is of no value, while at the same time they do not come under the limits of our present subject. We may merely remark, in passing, that the first four general councils,—which were held, two in the fourth, and two in the fifth century,—whose doctrinal decisions upon points of faith are generally admitted by Protestants to have been sound and orthodox, neither said nor did anything which affords the slightest countenance to the claim of Papal supremacy; that many things in their history and proceedings afford arguments against the Papal supremacy, which its

most learned and ingenious defenders have been unable satisfactorily to answer; that, in several instances, these councils passed decrees or canons which were opposed and protested against by the Bishop of Rome or his agents, as manifestly inconsistent with claims which he then advanced, even though short of universal supremacy or headship over the whole church; and that the first general council which really asserted the Papal supremacy with anything like explicitness, though no doubt it had been practically established and exercised long before, was the fourth Lateran Council, held under Pope Innocent III., in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Of course no evidence can be derived from general councils in support of the position that Peter taught the church that his successors in the see of Rome were to possess universal supremacy: that is, no evidence which can be regarded as having any weight until *after* it has been proved that *all* these assemblies, which the Church of Rome calls general councils, were possessed of infallibility.

The second head of evidence to which Bellarmine refers in support of the apostolicity of this pretended tradition, is the decrees of Popes; and here, too, we would need a previous proof of their infallibility, before we can receive their testimony as valid, especially in their own cause,—in a matter in which their own claims and interests are so deeply involved. He does not pretend to produce anything in support of this claim from any of the Popes of the first three centuries, and this is enough to show the futility of his appeal to this source of evidence. The first Pope he produces is Julius, who held the see of Rome about the middle of the fourth century, at the time of the famous Council of Sardica, and was probably the author of the canon,—if, indeed, the Council of Sardica ever passed such a canon,—which three of his successors so unsuccessfully employed to reduce the African church to subjection to Rome in the beginning of the next century. But, in truth, he has no testimonies even from Bishops of Rome which bear explicitly upon the point of a claim to proper universal jurisdiction, derived by succession from Peter, till the time of Pope Leo I., about the middle of the fifth century; while there is no evidence that this claim was generally conceded, even in the Western Church, till a much later period.

The third source of evidence to which Bellarmine refers is the consent of the fathers; and the only fathers to whom he refers

during the period we are at present considering, are Irenæus, Origen, and Cyprian: to Irenæus, as asserting the supremacy of the Church of Rome; to Origen, as asserting the supremacy of Peter; and to Cyprian, as asserting both. We formerly had occasion to remark, that Romanists could not produce the consent of the fathers, even of the fourth and fifth centuries, in support of their interpretation of those passages of Scripture on which they found the supremacy of Peter. In regard, for instance, to the passage which affords the only support to the claim that is possessed of anything like plausibility—viz., "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build My church"—some of them interpret the rock to mean Christ Himself; *most* of them, to mean the faith which Peter confessed on that occasion; while the few of them who regard it as referring primarily, and in the first instance, to Peter himself personally, do not interpret it as conferring upon him any power or jurisdiction which was not either then or afterwards conferred upon the other apostles. Now, all that can be justly alleged in regard to Origen is, that he seems to have taken the last of these views of the meaning of this passage; while the fact that he was not a believer in Peter's supremacy, in the Popish sense of it, is established beyond all fair controversy, by his having repeatedly, and most explicitly, asserted the full and perfect equality of the apostles in point of power or authority. In regard to Cyprian the case stands thus: in discussing the subject of the unity of the church—and we formerly had occasion to mention that he made considerable advances towards developing the Popish doctrine upon that subject—he makes some statements about Peter's being appointed by Christ to be the symbol or representative of unity, and about the Bishop of Rome still continuing to serve a similar purpose. What he meant by this notion it is not easy to say; and the probability is, that if we could interrogate him upon the subject, he would himself be unable to tell us clearly what he meant. Barrow calls it "subtle and mystical," and adds, "I can discern little solidity in this conceit, and as little harm." * But *it is certain* that he did not mean by it to ascribe to Peter and the Bishops of Rome a right to govern the whole church; and the conclusive proof of this is to be found in these three facts: first, that he has repeatedly asserted, in the plainest and most

* Barrow on the Pope's Supremacy, p. 560.

unequivocal terms, that all the apostles were invested with equal power and authority, no one having jurisdiction over another; secondly, that he has asserted with equal plainness, that all bishops are possessed of equal power and authority, each being entirely independent of any other bishop in his own diocese; and, thirdly, that he distinctly and boldly acted upon these principles in his controversy with Stephen, Bishop of Rome, about re-baptizing heretics,—Stephen, indeed, not demanding submission upon the ground of any supremacy which he claimed, and Cyprian making it very manifest, by the way in which he treated Stephen and his arguments, that if any such claim had been put forth, it would have been openly denied and strenuously resisted. Irenæus is the only other authority produced during this period. It is not alleged that he has asserted the supremacy of Peter, but it is alleged that he has asserted the supremacy of the Roman Church; and, in proof of this, a passage is produced from him—or rather the Latin translation, for we have not the original Greek of this part of his book against heresies—in which he ascribes to it, *potiorem principalitatem*,—a passage which, since it is the only plausible testimony which the first three centuries afford in support of the Papal supremacy, is much boasted of by Popish writers, and has given rise to a great deal of learned discussion. It would be a waste of time to give even an abstract of the arguments by which Protestant authors have proved that this passage is utterly insufficient for the purposes to which the Romanists apply it, especially as they could not be stated within any short compass. The import and bearing of the passage are fully discussed in Mosheim's Commentaries.* It cannot be denied that the statement gives some apparent countenance to the Papal claims; but even if it were much more clear and unequivocal than it is, it would be utterly insufficient, standing as it does alone, to support the weight which the Church of Rome suspends upon it. Mosheim, after investigating the meaning of the passage, and setting forth what he regards as the most probable interpretation of the *potior principalitas*, one which gives no countenance to the Papal claim of supremacy, concludes in this way: "Dedecet profecto viros eruditos et sapientes ex verbis obscuris et incertis privati hominis et unius pusillæ ac pauperis ecclesiæ episcopi, boni

* Saec. ii., cap. xxi., p. 263.

quidem et pii, verum mediocri acumine ac ingenio præditi, jus publicum totius ecclesiæ Christianæ atque formam gubernationis ejus a Christo præscriptam elicere."

The negative argument, which is manifestly one of great power and weight in a case of this sort, stands untouched and unbroken, with nothing that can be alleged on the other side except a single obscure and ambiguous passage in a barbarous Latin translation of Irenæus, made we know not when or by whom. And the argument is not wholly negative, for there is much in the history of the church during the first three centuries which affords positive and conclusive proof that the claim of the Bishops of Rome to rule or govern the universal church was not then advanced or acknowledged, and, indeed, was utterly unknown. In surveying the history of this period, with the view of ascertaining from the events which occurred, and the course of conduct pursued, whether the Bishops of Rome were regarded and treated as the rulers of the church, the following considerations must be kept in view. The supremacy of the Pope must necessarily imply these two things: first, that the Bishops of Rome are, and have always been acknowledged to be, the highest ultimate judges in all theological and ecclesiastical controversies, at least when there were no general councils; and, secondly, that communion with the Roman Church, and subjection to the authority of its bishop, were held necessary in order to being regarded as being in the communion of the catholic or general church. All Romanists admit that the exercise and acknowledgment of the Papal supremacy imply these things. It is because Protestants, both in theory and in practice, deny them, that Papists denounce them as throwing off the authority of Christ's vicar, and as putting themselves beyond the pale of the Catholic Church, and thereby excluding themselves from salvation. Keeping these things in view, and then surveying the history of the early church, we shall meet with much that affords conclusive proof that the Papal supremacy was utterly unknown,—that the idea of any such right as supremacy implies being vested in the Bishop of Rome had not then entered into men's minds. If Clement had ever imagined that he, as the successor of Peter, was invested with supremacy over the church, he could not have written such a letter as he did to the church of Corinth, in which, when they were indulging in a spirit of

faction and turbulence, he contented himself with labouring to persuade them by scriptural considerations to respect and obey their own presbyters. The facts connected with the two discussions concerning the time of observing Easter—the one about the middle, and the other near the end, of the second century—not only afford conclusive proof, as we formerly showed, of the utter baselessness of all claims, even then, to authentic apostolical tradition, but also of the utter ignorance of the whole church of any right vested in the Bishops of Rome to rule or govern it; while the facts connected with the controversy about the re-baptizing of heretics, in the third century, and many others that might be mentioned, establish the same important position.

Indeed, it is an easy matter to trace the whole history of the rise and progress of the Papal supremacy, from its first faint dawnings till its full establishment; and it is certainly by far the most extraordinary instance of successful imposture and iniquity the world has ever witnessed. It was an object prosecuted for a succession of ages with unwearied zeal: every incident was most carefully improved for promoting it, and no scruples of conscience, no regard to truth or veracity, no respect for the laws of God or man, were ever allowed to stand in the way of extending this usurped dominion over the church. Popish writers delight to dwell upon the permanency and extensive influence of the Papacy, as contrasted with the comparatively brief duration of empires and kingdoms that have risen and passed away; and some of them have really made a striking and impressive picture of this topic, one rather fitted to touch the imagination, and to call forth feelings of solemnity and veneration; but when, instead of being satisfied with a mere fancy sketch, we examine it with care and attention,—when we consider the utter baselessness of the ground on which the Papal supremacy rests, and the way in which this power has been secured and exercised,—we cannot but be persuaded that, though in some respects beautiful outwardly, it is within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH.

We proceed now to advert to the testimony of the first three centuries on the subject of church government, and especially of Episcopacy, or, as it should rather be called, of Prelacy. Prelatists have been usually very loud and confident in appealing to the testimony of the primitive church in support of their principles; and if the primitive church meant the church of the fourth and fifth centuries, they could, no doubt, produce a great body of testimony in their favour—testimony, however, which becomes feebler and feebler during every generation as we go backwards, until the truly primitive New Testament period, when it entirely disappears.

The substance of what we are persuaded can be fully established upon this point is this: That there was no Prelacy in the apostolic age; that there is no authentic evidence of its existence in the generation immediately succeeding that of the apostles; that the first faint traces of Prelacy, or rather of something like it, are to be seen about the middle of the second century; and that the power of Prelates continued gradually to increase and extend, until, by the end of the fourth century, it had attained a condition pretty similar to that which modern Prelatic churches exhibit, though there was not even then the same entire exclusion of presbyters from all share in the government of the church, which the practice of the Church of England presents. If there be anything approaching to accuracy in this general statement, it would seem very like as if Prelacy were a feature or part of the great apostasy from scriptural truth and order, which so early began to manifest itself in the church, and which was at length fully developed in the antichristian system of the Church of Rome; in other words, it might seem as if Prelacy were a branch

or portion of Popery. The question, whether it be so or not, is not one of great practical importance, for, perhaps, at bottom it may resolve itself very much, in one sense, into a dispute about words; and the question whether a Prelatic government ought to exist in the church, must be determined by an appeal to Scripture. But as the general question which this particular point suggests,—viz., as to the grounds on which an allegation with respect to any doctrine or practice, that it is Popish, should rest, and the weight due to such an allegation,—is one of some importance in theological discussions, it may not be unseasonable to take this opportunity of making a few remarks upon it.

It has long been a common practice among controversialists to charge their opponents with holding Popish views and sanctioning Popish practices, and to adduce this as a presumption, at least, against them. The charge has been sometimes adduced by men of very scanty intelligence and information, upon very insufficient grounds; and that, again, has afforded a sort of excuse to others who could not easily defend themselves against such a charge for scouting and ridiculing, rather than answering, it. For instance, some of the ignorant and foolish sectaries, who sprung up in such numbers in England during the period of the Commonwealth, were accustomed to allege that Presbytery was just as Popish as Prelacy was; and Episcopalian controversialists, down to the present day, are in the habit of quoting some of the statements of those persons to this effect, as if they were proofs of the folly of such a charge against *whatever* it might be directed. Some persons in our own day have asserted, that the doctrine of the obligation of civil rulers to employ their civil authority, with a view to the promotion of religion and the welfare of the church, is Popish; while others, going to the opposite extreme, have adduced the same charge against the doctrine of the entire independence of the church of all civil control; though it can be proved, I am persuaded, that both these doctrines are taught in Scripture, and though it is certain that they were maintained, but in a much purer form, by the Reformers as well as by the Church of Rome. These are specimens of the inconsiderate and reckless way in which this charge is often bandied about by ignorant and foolish men; but these, and many other specimens of a similar kind, afford no sufficient proof that the charge is universally ridiculous, or that it is impossible to discriminate between the cases in which

it does, and those in which it does not, rest upon a satisfactory foundation.

At a very early period, we see plain traces of corruption and declension in the church of Christ. This continued to increase and extend age after age, until it reached its full development in the matured system of the apostate Church of Rome. The leading features which this progress of declension and corruption assumed, and the principal results to which it tended, are sufficiently discernible: the obscuration and perversion of the doctrines of grace; the multiplication of rites and ceremonies in the worship of God, and the ascription to them, as well as to the divinely appointed sacramental ordinances, of an undue importance and efficacy; the invention of new orders and offices in the government of the church,—all tending to depress and to reduce to slavery the Christian people and the office-bearers whom Christ appointed, and terminating at length in a system which leads men to build upon a false foundation for salvation, and to submit implicitly to the tyranny of their spiritual superiors. Such is Popery fully matured; but the seeds of the system were early sown, and were very gradually developed. Everything which really enters as a component part into this great system of error and corruption, may be fairly enough called Popish; and the fact, if it can be established, that it does enter into this system, and may therefore be fairly called Popish, forms, no doubt, a very strong presumption against it.

But everything which has been and is held by the Church of Rome, must not be regarded as Popish in this obnoxious sense. She has retained a profession of some important scriptural doctrines and principles, though there are none which she has not, more or less extensively, and more or less directly, corrupted. She has retained an orthodox profession upon the subject of the Trinity, while she has corrupted the doctrine and worship of God by polytheism and idolatry. But we must not, either because of her having retained so much truth, or of her having joined so much error with it, concur with the Socinians in setting aside the doctrine of the Trinity as Popish. She has retained the truth of the entire independence of the church of Christ of civil control, though she has sometimes practically sacrificed this truth to some extent in her unprincipled prosecution of her selfish interests (as, for example, in tolerating patronage), while she has corrupted it

by claiming for the church control over the civil authorities; but we should not, either because of her holding this truth, or of her having to some extent corrupted it, concur with infidels and Erastians in denying the independence of the church, or in subjecting it to the civil power, as if everything else were Popery. In order, then, to warrant us in calling any doctrine or practice Popish, and urging this as a presumption against its truth, it is not enough that it has been held by the Church of Rome; it should also have been rejected by the great body of the Reformers—those great men to whom the Holy Spirit so fully unfolded the mind of God as revealed in His word, and whom He raised up and qualified for restoring His truth and purifying His church. When *both* these positions can be fully established in regard to any doctrine or practice,—viz., first, that it is held by the Church of Rome; and, secondly, that it was denied or rejected by the great body of the Reformers,—we are fairly entitled to call it Popish, and we may fairly regard the proof of these two facts as establishing a strong presumption against it.

Still it must never be forgotten that there lies an appeal from all human authorities, from fathers or reformers of every age and of every church, to the only certain and unerring standard, the word of the living God; and that neither the allegation nor the proof that a doctrine or practice may be fairly called Popish exempts us from the obligation to examine whether its claims, if it put forth any, to the sanction of the sacred Scriptures be well founded or not, and to regulate our treatment of it by the result of this examination. Prelacy has been often designated by Presbyterian writers as Popish; and if it be a sufficient foundation for such a charge to prove that it is held both theoretically and practically by the Church of Rome—that it was rejected by the great body of the Reformers, as well as by those who, in the middle ages, were raised up as witnesses against antichrist—that its introduction formed a step in the process of the corruption of the early church,—and that it afforded some facilities for the growth and development of the Papal system,—then the charge is well founded, for all these positions can be established against Prelacy by satisfactory evidence. The Church of Rome has much more fully and more explicitly asserted the doctrine of Prelacy than the Church of England has done. All that the Church of England has ventured to lay down upon this point is contained in the fol-

lowing vague and ambiguous declaration in the preface to the Ordinal for ordination: "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy scripture and ancient authors, that from the apostles' time there have been these orders of Ministers in Christ's church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons;" whereas the Council of Trent has set forth the doctrine much more explicitly, and has required the belief of it, because it was generally denied by the Reformers, under an anathema. The two following canons were passed in the twenty-third session of the council, and, of course, form the standard doctrine of the church: "Si quis dixerit, in ecclesia catholica non esse hierarchiam divina ordinatione institutam, quæ constat ex episcopis, presbyteris, et ministris: anathema sit;" and again: "Si quis dixerit, episcopos non esse presbyteris superiores, vel non habere potestatem confirmandi et ordinandi; vel eam, quam habent, illis esse cum presbyteris communem, ... anathema sit."* The adoption of these canons by the Council of Trent not only proves that Prelacy is the doctrine of the Church of Rome, but also proves indirectly what can be conclusively established by direct evidence,—that it was generally rejected by the Reformers.

It is an insufficient defence against the allegation with respect to a particular doctrine or practice that it is Popish, to prove that it existed in the church before what we commonly call the Popish system was fully developed. The germs or rudiments of that very system can be traced back to the apostolic age. There were men then in the church who loved to have the pre-eminence, who were for imposing ceremonies and establishing will-worship; and it should not be forgotten that the introduction and establishment of a new office, held by men possessed of higher rank and authority than other office-bearers (presbyters and deacons) whom the apostles appointed—and such we believe Prelacy to have been—runs precisely in the line which ultimately terminated in a universal bishop, and, no doubt, contributed to extend and strengthen it. At the same time, it is perhaps more proper and becoming that, out of regard to the valuable services which many prelates and Prelatists have rendered to the cause of Protestantism, we should abstain from the application of the term Popish to Prelacy, and content ourselves with asserting and proving that it has no

* Canones et Decreta Con. Trid., Sess. xxiii., c. iv., Can. vi. vii.

warrant in Scripture or primitive antiquity, and therefore should not exist in the church of Christ. But still, when Prelatists open their case, as they often do, by asserting that Prelacy prevailed over the whole Christian world for 1500 years, and was found obtaining over the whole church at the period of the Reformation, and adduce this as a presumption of its truth, it is neither unbecoming nor unreasonable to remind them that, if it prevailed generally till the time of the Reformation, it was rejected by the great body of the Reformers as a Popish corruption: that we can cut off two or three centuries from the commencement of their 1500 years; and that then we can show that some other Popish corruptions can be traced back, at least in their germs or rudiments, to as venerable an antiquity, and enjoyed thereafter as general a prevalence, as Prelacy can claim.

Sec. I.—*Prelacy;—State of the Question.*

The position which the advocates of Prelacy commonly lay down upon this subject is to this effect: We find from the writings of the early fathers, that from the apostolic age bishops are to be found in all the churches, recognised and obeyed as the highest ecclesiastical office-bearers;—this state of things could not have existed so early and so generally, unless it had been introduced and established by the apostles themselves: whence we infer that Episcopacy is of apostolic origin and authority. When the subject is presented in this form, the question naturally and obviously occurs, whether or not the argument, founded on the alleged earliness and universality of the existence of bishops, is expected to be received as a proof of a *jus divinum*,—a proof of what the apostles did, and of what, therefore, the church is still bound to do; or merely as a presumption in favour of a certain mode of interpreting some portions of Scripture, bearing, or alleged to bear, upon this topic. Both views have been held by different classes of Episcopalians. Some High-church Episcopalians—as, for example, the Tractarians—have admitted that the divine right of Prelacy could not be fully established from Scripture, but, agreeing in substance with the Church of Rome on the doctrine of tradition, or the principle of catholic consent, they regard the testimony of the early church as sufficient to prove it; and, indeed, they expressly adduce this matter of Prelacy as a proof of the

imperfection of Scripture, alleging that we are dependent upon tradition for conclusive evidence in support of it. Other Episcopalians think they can establish Prelacy from Scripture, and they refer to the testimony of the primitive church merely as affording some corroboration of the scriptural argument; while not a few seem to hover between these two points. Most of them, indeed, seem to have a sort of lurking consciousness that the Scripture evidence for Prelacy is not of itself very conclusive, and stands much in need of being corroborated by the testimony of the early church; while they vary among themselves in their mode of stating formally the value and importance of the evidence they profess to produce from antiquity, according to the soundness and clearness of their convictions and impressions with respect to the sufficiency and perfection of the sacred Scriptures, and the necessity of a scriptural proof in order to support a *jus divinum*.

It is, however, of the highest importance, that, in the investigation of all such subjects, we retain right impressions of the clear and unchangeable line of demarcation between the testimony of Scripture and all merely human authority; that we do not forget that we are bound to believe and to practise nothing as of divine authority, the proof and warrant of which cannot be deduced from the word of God; and also that,—as we had occasion more fully to explain in treating of the Pope's supremacy,—if, in order to establish any conclusion which is professedly based upon some scriptural statements, the proof of any matters of fact be necessary to complete the argument, these matters of fact must also be established from Scripture, else the evidence of a *jus divinum* falls to the ground. The facts may be established sufficiently by ordinary human testimony; *but if the argument from Scripture cannot be completed conclusively without them*, then we are entitled to say, that since God has not been pleased to make them known to us through the medium of His word, He does not require us to receive, as a part of His revelation, and as binding by His authority, the conclusion to the proof of which they are indispensable. Episcopalians often plead their cause as if they had some vague notion of its resting partly upon Scripture, and partly upon antiquity, or upon some indescribable compound of the two, which is neither the one nor the other. It is, however, indispensable that these two things be kept distinct, each having its own proper province and function assigned to it: that if Scripture be indeed the only rule of faith

and practice, its due and exclusive prerogative be always fully maintained; and that nothing be allowed to interfere, theoretically or practically, directly or indirectly, openly or latently, with its paramount and exclusive authority. It is of some importance that, if possible, the doctrine and practice of the primitive church upon this point, and upon all points, should be ascertained; but the importance of this sinks into nothing when compared with that of ascertaining the doctrine of Scripture and the practice of the apostles from the original and only authentic source of information. If it should turn out that the doctrine and practice of the primitive church, after the apostles' time, are in favour of Prelacy; and if it be further alleged, as is often done, that there is something peculiar in this case, which renders the post-apostolic practice a more certain proof of what the apostles established than in the case of other alleged apostolic traditions,—perhaps this alleged peculiarity may be entitled to consideration, though we think enough has been said to show that, as a general position, the prevalence of a doctrine or practice in the second and third centuries affords of itself but a very feeble presumption that it was taught or prescribed by the apostles. The truth, however, is, that antiquity affords no stronger evidence in favour of Prelacy even in degree, to say nothing of the vast difference in kind, than Scripture does.

In order to estimate aright the bearing of the testimony of antiquity upon the subject of Prelacy, it is of importance to attend, in the first place, to the true and proper state of the question between its advocates and its opponents; for I am persuaded that a considerable proportion of the evidence which Prelatists are accustomed to adduce from antiquity derives its whole plausibility from the tacit and insidious influence of the sophism called *ignoratio elenchi*, or a mistake as to the precise import of the point to be proved; and I need scarcely remark that the investigation and settlement of the *status questionis* is equally important, whether we are trying to estimate the amount of the scriptural or of the historical evidence. The general question may be correctly stated in this way: Should there exist permanently in the church of Christ, a separate and distinct order of ordinary office-bearers superior to pastors, invested with jurisdiction over them, and possessed of the exclusive right of performing certain functions which are essential to the preservation of an organized church, and the ordinary administration of ecclesiastical affairs? So far as the

scriptural argument is concerned, the proper question is, Have we in Scripture any sufficient intimation that it was the mind and will of Christ that this separate and distinct order of office-bearers should exist? and so far as the *historical* argument is concerned, the question is, Did this superior order exist in the early church? and if so, does this fact afford any proof or presumption that it was the mind and will of Christ that it should exist permanently in His church? or does it, upon any other ground, impose upon the church an obligation to have it?

The proof that it is the true state of the question which has now been given, is this, that unless Prelatists are prepared openly and manfully to take up the affirmative of these questions, Presbyterians have no real controversy with them, while they can have no material objection to adduce against Presbyterianism. The substance of the fundamental allegation of the Episcopalians is this, that Presbyterians want an important and divinely authorized order of office-bearers, which they have; and that, in consequence of the want of this order, there are certain necessary ecclesiastical functions, such as confirmation and ordination (exclusively appropriated to this higher order), which cannot be validly, or at least regularly, executed in Presbyterian churches; and, on the other hand, the substance of the fundamental allegation of the Presbyterians is, that they have all the classes of ordinary office-bearers which the apostles instituted,—that the ordinary pastors are fully authorized to execute all the functions which are necessary to the right administration of the affairs of the church,—and that the Episcopalians have introduced a new, unauthorized, and unnecessary order of office-bearers. No Presbyterian contends that the presbyters should not have a president, or that the president should not have, in virtue of his appointment, a certain measure of superior power or authority. No Presbyterian contends that there is any very definite standard of the precise degree of power or authority which the president or moderator should possess, or of the precise length of time during which he might be allowed to continue in office, or that, in settling these points, there is no room for the exercise of Christian wisdom, and a regard to times and circumstances. Many Presbyterians would admit that the main objection even to a perpetual moderatorship, or the presbyters appointing one of their number to fill the chair, *ad vitam aut culpam*, while he still continued a mere presbyter, with no exclusive right to

perform certain functions, which could not be executed without him, and rendered wholly subject to their jurisdiction, is the general injurious *tendency* of such an arrangement,—its tendency, as established by melancholy experience, in the history of the church, to introduce a proper Prelacy. Calvin was moderator of the presbytery of Geneva as long as he lived, probably just because no other man would take the chair while he was present. But after his death, Beza, to whom a similar mark of respect would then have been conceded by his colleagues, declined it, and insisted that the practice of having a constant moderator, as our forefathers used to call it, should be abandoned, as likely to lead to injurious results.* Presbyterians, too, would generally admit, that special and extraordinary circumstances might warrant the church in extending somewhat, *for a time*, the power of a president or moderator, and, more generally, in delegating extraordinary powers to individuals. All this goes to prove that the one essential subject of controversy is a proper prelate, holding a distinct ordinary office, higher than that of the presbyters, having jurisdiction over them, in place of being subject to their control, and possessed, in virtue of his superior office, of an exclusive power of performing certain functions which they cannot execute without him.

Many Prelatists dislike to have the true state of the question brought out distinctly in this way, from a sort of vague consciousness, which is certainly well founded, that much of the evidence which they are accustomed to adduce in support of their principles, does really not touch the point in dispute, as we have now explained it; and many of them have laboured to obscure and perplex it. These persons would fain represent the real subject of controversy as turning merely upon this, viz., parity or imparity among ministers; and they are accustomed to talk in this strain, that they do not contend for any certain measure of superior power or authority in bishops, or about the name by which they may be called, but merely for some such imparity, or superiority, and subordination, as may prevent confusion and disorder. One might be tempted, when listening to some of them discussing the state of the question, or rather evading and perplexing it, to believe that the difference was very slight,—that Episcopacy was a very harmless thing, and might be tolerated without much danger, or

* Ruchat, Hist. de la Réform. de la Suisse, tome vii., pp. 47, 48.

much disturbance of the ordinary scriptural arrangements. The history of the church abundantly refutes this notion, as far as the general tendency of Prelacy in any form or degree is concerned; and the whole history of this controversy, as it has been conducted upon both sides, clearly proves that the real point in dispute is not the vague question of parity or imparity, but the warrantableness and obligation of having a distinct class of ordinary office-bearers, with inherent official jurisdiction over pastors, and an exclusive right in themselves to execute certain necessary ecclesiastical functions.

And here we may remark, that the settlement of the true state of the question, settles also the *onus probandi*, and throws it upon the Episcopalians. It is admitted on both sides, that the apostles instituted the presbyterate and the diaconate, and have sufficiently manifested their intention, or rather that of their Master, that these offices should continue permanently in the church. The question is, Did they also, in addition to these, institute another ordinary, distinct, and higher office—viz., that of prelates—which was to enjoy the same permanance? Episcopalians affirm that they did, and are manifestly bound to prove it. Presbyterians deny it, and are merely bound, according to all the rules of sound logic, to answer the Episcopalian arguments,—to prove that they are insufficient to establish the conclusion in support of which they are adduced. This is all that can be justly demanded of Presbyterians, and is quite sufficient, when accomplished, to give them the victory, and to leave them in entire possession of the field; but they have never hesitated to undertake to prove, *ex abundanti*, that no such permanent office as that of prelates has been instituted by any competent authority, and that the pastors of congregations are the highest ordinary functionaries in the church, and are fully warranted to execute all the functions, including ordination, necessary for the preservation of the church and the administration of ecclesiastical affairs.

While it is important, in order to a right comprehension of this subject, and a fair estimate of the evidence commonly brought to bear upon it, both from Scripture and from antiquity, that we should see and remember that the real point in dispute is a permanent order of office-bearers distinct from, and superior to, pastors or presbyters; yet it should not be forgotten that there have been some, calling themselves Episcopalians, who have never maintained

the affirmative of the question, as we have explained it; and who, not to serve a merely controversial purpose, and to diminish the difficulty of their position in an argumentative point of view, but in all honesty and sincerity, have reduced the difference between bishops and presbyters to a very narrow compass. Such a man was the great and good Archbishop Usher, and several others of the most excellent and most eminent men in the Church of England, who have commonly made use, in explaining their views, of an old scholastic position, in support of which many authorities can be produced even from Romish writers who flourished before the Council of Trent,—viz., that bishops and presbyters *differunt tantum gradu non ordine.** We may not be able to see very clearly the meaning, or the solidity and value, of the distinction which they employ, and may be somewhat surprised that they should continue to call themselves supporters of Prelacy; but we should not disregard the great importance of the concession which they make to truth: we should give them credit for the comparative soundness of their views; we should ever be willing to manifest courtesy and kindness towards them, and seek rather to diminish than to widen the distance between them and us, especially because the men who have supported this view of the question have usually been greatly superior to other Episcopalians, both in respect to general orthodoxy of doctrine, and to general worth and excellence of personal character. Episcopalians of this class all admit that Presbyterian ordinations, performed without a prelate, are valid, though they usually regard them as irregular; and it is not possible but that Presbyterians should view these men and their principles with very different feelings from those with which they contemplate the bigoted High Churchmen who regard all Presbyterian ordinations as null and void, and all Presbyterian ministers, though ordained, as Timothy was, by the laying on of hands, as unwarranted intruders into the sacred office, and profaners of sacred things,—a class of men in regard to whom history testifies that very few of them have given any satisfactory evidence of their living under the influence of genuine Christian principle, and that very few have been honoured with any considerable measure of Christian usefulness.

There have been some Episcopalians who have virtually

* Forbesii Irenicum, and Usher's "Reduction of Episcopacy."

abandoned all claim to a *jus divinum* in favour of Prelacy in any sense, and who have contented themselves with labouring to prove that Prelacy, though not established by the apostles, was a warrantable arrangement which the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities might lawfully introduce into the church, and to which, when thus introduced, men might lawfully submit; while they think it has many considerations, derived from its antiquity and usefulness, or from its accordance with the civil constitution and social arrangements of the particular country, to support it. This was in substance the view of the matter taken by many of the Reformers of the Church of England, as well as by some Lutheran divines, many of whom, like the Anglicans, have manifested a good deal of an Erastian and latitudinarian spirit in matters of outward order. Our dispute with these persons does not properly involve a discussion of the truth of Prelatic principles, or the obligation and necessity of a Prelatic government, but must be settled by an investigation of the more general and comprehensive question,—whether or not it be lawful to introduce into the government of the church of Christ, offices and arrangements which have no scriptural warrant or sanction? This, however, is not the object which I have more immediately in view, which is to explain the true state of the question in the Prelatic controversy, as an indispensable preliminary to a right estimate of the evidence commonly adduced on both sides, in order to its decision. In regard, then, to all the various and abundant materials usually produced and discussed in this controversy, the only proper question is,—Do they, or do they not, furnish evidence in support of a distinct order of office-bearers, superior to presbyters, and authorized to execute certain ecclesiastical functions which presbyters cannot perform? All the various arguments usually adduced and discussed in the Prelatic controversy, should be brought face to face with *this* question, on which the whole controversy hinges. The only point of very great importance is just to determine whether or not they contain anything that requires, or contributes to require, us to answer this question in the affirmative. The habitual recollection of this would greatly aid us in discerning and establishing the insufficiency of the Prelatic arguments, whether derived from Scripture or antiquity.

If this be the true state of the question, then all the elaborate attempts in which some Episcopalian controversialists have in-

dulged themselves in order to establish the general position, that there ought to be an imparity among the office-bearers of the Christian church,—especially those derived from the constitution of the Jewish church, and from our Saviour sending out seventy disciples as well as twelve apostles,—are at once swept away as irrelevant. We say they do not affect the real point in dispute; and we say *further*, that a proof of the general position of the propriety, expediency, and probability of an imparity or gradation among ecclesiastical office-bearers, concludes nothing against us, for we have imparity in the two distinct offices of presbyters and deacons, the one subordinate to the other. Some Episcopalians have thought they could deduce arguments both from Scripture and antiquity in favour generally of a threefold order among ecclesiastical office-bearers. Could they prove generally a threefold order among *pastors*, or three different ranks or gradations among men all equally entitled to preach the word and administer the sacraments, this would be something to the purpose; but they do not pretend to produce any proofs or presumptions of a general kind in favour of *this* position; and as to any general consideration, whether of arguments or authorities, that may seem to tell in favour of a threefold order *among ecclesiastical office-bearers*, we say, *in addition* to the general allegation of irrelevancy, that they conclude nothing against us; for we too have a threefold order, inasmuch as the fundamental principles of Presbyterian church government may be correctly stated in this way,—first, that two distinct classes of permanent office-bearers were instituted by the apostles, viz., presbyters, to perform spiritual offices, and to administer the spiritual affairs of the church, and deacons to manage its temporal or secular affairs; and secondly, that the general class of presbyters is divided by good scriptural warrant into two ranks or orders, commonly called teaching and ruling presbyters,—thus making a threefold order among ecclesiastical office-bearers.

The other arguments commonly employed by Episcopalians are founded upon the alleged fact that James (whether this James was an apostle or not, is still a matter of controversial discussion) was settled by the apostles as bishop of the church at Jerusalem; upon the angels of the Asian churches, to whom our risen Saviour addressed epistles by His servant John; and upon the cases of Timothy and Titus. In regard to the first of these

arguments from the alleged episcopate of James, it is disposed of at once, in so far as it professes to be a scriptural argument, by the consideration formerly adverted to,—viz., that the fact, if fact it be, that James was in the modern sense Bishop of Jerusalem, is not asserted, either directly or by implication, in the Scripture itself; for it is little better than ridiculous to adduce, in proof of it, anything contained in the scriptural account of the Council of Jerusalem in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts. As to the Asian angels, even admitting, for the sake of argument, that they were single individuals, though this cannot be proved, and though we think that it is highly improbable—*i.e.*, we think that the prepon derance of evidence is against it—yet the very utmost it proves is, that there was some one man in these churches who occupied a somewhat prominent or outstanding place as distinguished from others, who was in such a sense the representative of the church as to render it a proper and becoming thing that any communication intended for the church, as our Lord's epistles unquestionably were, should be addressed to him. After it is proved that these angels were literally single persons, then *this* further may be regarded as proved, but most assuredly nothing more. And here, again, we have to remark, that this does not come up to the point in dispute. There is not a vestige of evidence, not even a presumption, that the angel was a prelate, that he belonged to a higher class or order than the presbyters, that he had singly any jurisdiction or authority over them, that he could execute any functions to which they were incompetent; in short, there is not a vestige of evidence, not even a presumption, that he was anything more than the moderator of the presbytery.

The argument founded upon the cases of Timothy and Titus, and the power or jurisdiction which they exercised, is the only one adduced in favour of Prelacy from Scripture which appears to me to rise even to the rank of plausibility. "The Unbishoping of Timothy and Titus," to adopt the title of a valuable work of Prynne's, filled with curious and varied learning, requires a mode of discussion that does not lie within the range of my present object. It is to be effected chiefly by proving, what can be conclusively established, that the office which they held was that of an evangelist, and not that of a prelate or diocesan bishop; and that the office was an extraordinary one, and not intended to

be either perpetual or universal; while it may still be competent for the church to vest somewhat similar powers, in special and extraordinary circumstances, and for a time, in a single individual. Still the application of the view which has been given of the true state of the question between Presbytery and Prelacy, the only point with which I am at present concerned, does contribute *somewhat* to a satisfactory disposal of this argument as well as the others; for it is important to observe, that while Timothy and Titus seem to have exercised some jurisdiction over the presbytery of Ephesus and Crete when they were there, there is no proof in anything said in Scripture concerning them, that their presence was necessary to give validity to any ecclesiastical acts; nothing which implies or indicates that during their repeated and prolonged absences from their alleged dioceses,—of which absences we have clear intimations in Scripture,—the presbyters themselves could not do all that could be done when they were present; or that presbyters could not perform all necessary ecclesiastical acts in other parts of the church where, so far as we learn from Scripture, there were no such functionaries as Timothy and Titus, no persons vested with the jurisdiction which the apostles delegated to them. This exclusive right of executing certain ecclesiastical functions, incompetent for ordinary presbyters, is an essential feature of the office of the prelate, and there is no evidence whatever that it applied to Timothy and Titus; or, to employ a good and useful scholastic distinction, often introduced by old writers in the discussion of these topics, we admit that the case of Timothy and Titus, *could their office be first proved to be ordinary and perpetual*, might afford a good argument in favour of prelates having a superior *potestas jurisdictionis;* but we maintain that it would not even then, or upon that supposition, conceded for the sake of argument, afford any evidence in support of their possessing a higher *potestas ordinis*, in virtue of which their presence could be held indispensable to the valid, or even the regular, performance of any necessary ecclesiastical acts; and if so, then it falls short of furnishing an argument in favour of modern Prelacy.

The application of a correct view of the true state of the question in the controversy between Presbyterians and Prelatists, is equally obvious and useful in enabling us to form a right estimate of the evidence commonly adduced in favour of Prelacy from antiquity; but the illustration of this must be deferred for the pre-

sent. In the meantime, I wish it to be remembered that I have not now been professing to give anything like a formal refutation of the Prelatic arguments derived from Scripture; and that still less have I been attempting to bring forward the direct scriptural proofs in support of Presbyterian church government. I have been merely explaining the true state of the question, the real import of the point in dispute, and have only referred *incidentally* to some Prelatic arguments, in order to illustrate the importance of having clear views and definite impressions upon this subject, and to elucidate the way and manner in which the views that have been given of the true state of the question may and should be applied in an investigation of the evidence.

I have said enough, however, even in these brief and incidental remarks, to show that *a large proportion* of the arguments which Episcopalians usually attempt to deduce from Scripture in support of their system of church government, are just specimens of the *ignoratio clenchi*, and that, even if admitted to rest upon a satisfactory foundation, they are quite insufficient to establish the point which is really controverted. Even if we admit, what cannot be proved, that the angels of the Asian churches were literally single individuals, there is nothing in anything said or indicated about them that affords even a presumption that they belonged to *a distinct* class of ordinary functionaries, superior to pastors of congregations. Even if we admit that the office held by Timothy and Titus was intended to be ordinary and perpetual, there is nothing said or indicated concerning it, which proves that their successors in that office, though they might be possessed of a certain superior, controlling jurisdiction over presbyters, had an exclusive right to perform any functions to which presbyters were incompetent. And if it be alleged that the case of Timothy and Titus affords an indication that the apostles intended their own superiority of office over presbyters to be perpetuated in the church, then we have to say, independently of every other consideration that may be brought to bear upon this argument, that there is no evidence whatever in Scripture, that the apostles, any more than Timothy or Titus, exercised any exclusive *potestas ordinis:* in other words, there is no evidence, that after presbyters had once been settled and ordained, there was any ordinary ecclesiastical functions for the performance of which these presbyters were incompetent, and for which the presence of an apostle

was necessary. And, indeed, it is remarkable that the apostles, when they speak of themselves as ordinary ecclesiastical office-bearers, take the designation of presbyters, and no other; and that (what is a very striking coincidence) perhaps the most specific statement we have in Scripture upon this whole subject is, that Timothy was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery,—an irrefragable proof that presbyters are quite competent to the valid and regular performance of *that act*, for which Prelatists specially hold the presence of a higher functionary to be indispensable.

Let me repeat, before proceeding to consider the testimony of antiquity upon this subject, that the *onus probandi* lies upon our opponents, and that if we can merely answer their arguments, and show that they have not produced sufficient proof of their position, we are quite entitled, upon this ground alone, to reject all their claims and pretensions, even without needing to adduce and establish the direct and positive evidence in support of the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism.

Sec. II.—*Prelacy:—Argument from Antiquity.*

In dealing with the argument from antiquity, on the subject of Prelacy, we have, first, to examine what evidence we have of the actual state of matters on this point, both in respect to doctrine and practice, in the primitive church; and then, secondly, to consider whether the actual state of matters, when once ascertained, affords any proof or even presumption that proper Prelacy, in the modern sense of the word, was introduced by the apostles. I have already shown that the only genuine and uncorrupted uninspired remains of apostolic men—men who had associated with the apostles—are the first epistle of Clement to the church of Corinth, and the epistle of Polycarp to the church at Philippi; and I endeavoured to answer an observation of Neander's upon a passage in Clement's epistle which he thinks favours Prelacy or the hierarchic system, and which, in consequence, he regarded as an interpolation of a later age. If the passage really favoured Prelacy, I would willingly concede to Neander that it must have been an interpolation; but it was proved, I think, that it did not in any measure favour Prelacy. This is the chief passage in Clement on which Prelatists profess to found anything in their

favour. Some of them, indeed, have attempted to found on a passage in which a distinction is made between ἡγουμενοι and πρεσβυτεροι, which they would fain represent as meaning prelates and presbyters; but it is perfectly certain, from the scope of the passage, that the word "presbyters" there means merely old men. So certain, indeed, is this, that even Archbishop Wake, who has not scrupled sometimes, in his translation of the apostolical fathers, unfairly to render presbyter by the word priest, translates it here "the aged." There is nothing, then, in the epistle of Clement which directly or by implication affords any countenance to the notion that bishops, in the modern sense, then existed or were thought necessary; while from the general substance and leading object of the epistle, it is perfectly manifest that, if there had been any bishop at Corinth, or if the see had been vacant at the time, as some ingenious Episcopalians have fancied, or if the idea which seems afterwards to have prevailed had then entered men's minds, —viz., that Prelacy was a good remedy against schism and faction,—something *must*, in the circumstances, have been said which would have proved this. So clear is all this, that the more candid Episcopalians admit it; and the latest Episcopalian Church historian, Dr Waddington, now Dean of Durham—whose History of the Church, though written for a popular purpose, is a very respectable work—after asserting without evidence, that all the other churches were provided with bishops by the apostles, adds:* "The church of Corinth seems to have been the only exception. Till the date of St Clement's epistle, its government had been clearly Presbyterial, and we do not learn the exact moment of the change."

It is rather unfortunate for our Episcopalian friends that the church of *Corinth* should have been the exception; for, if Prelacy is felt to promote unity, peace, and subordination, and to check schism and faction, and if this consideration was present to the minds of the apostles in establishing it,—and all this they commonly allege,—there is no undue presumption in saying that the apostle Paul would surely have taken care that, whatever *other* churches might have been left to the evils and disorders of Presbyterial government, the proud and factious church of Corinth

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* This passage was omitted in the second edition, but so far as concerns the actual condition of the church of Corinth, the statement is undoubtedly true.

should have been subjected in good time to the wholesome restraint of Episcopal domination. There is another unfortunate circumstance about this solitary exception. The church of Corinth happens to be the only one about whose internal condition, with respect to government, we have any very specific and satisfactory evidence applicable to this period,—viz., the end of the first century; and we are expected, it seems, to believe that *all* the other churches were at this time in a *different* condition in respect to government from the only one whose condition we have any certain means of knowing. Dr Waddington admits that the government of the church of Corinth was at this time "clearly Presbyterial," but he says it was the only exception. Well, then, we put this plain question, Will he select *any other* church he chooses, and undertake to produce evidence *half* as satisfactory that *its* government at this time was Prelatic? The remains of antiquity afford no sufficient materials for doing so; and the important fact, therefore, stands out, that the only church about whose internal condition we have any clear and satisfactory exscriptural evidence, applicable to the first century, had a government "clearly Presbyterial."

We have further in Clement's epistle a distinct and unequivocal declaration that the apostles appointed the first fruits of their ministry to be bishops and deacons, with the consent of the whole church; while there is no hint of their having appointed any other class of office-bearers than these two. It is scarcely disputed that the word bishops here is used, as it unquestionably is in the New Testament, synonymously with presbyters; and, therefore, we are warranted in saying that we find in Clement just what we find in the New Testament,—viz., that the apostles appointed only two orders of ordinary ecclesiastical office-bearers—the one called bishops or presbyters, and the other called deacons. And whereas those Episcopalians who admit that the bishops of the New Testament were just presbyters, or the second order, as they call them, contend that the apostles, before they left the world, indicated their mind that there should be a third and higher order, who were to be specially and pre-eminently *their* successors,—a position sufficiently disposed of by proving that there is nothing in the New Testament to establish this, and much to disprove it, —it is further to be observed that Clement, in telling us that the apostles appointed two orders of office-bearers—bishops and deacons

—evidently intended to describe the condition in which the apostles left the church, and in which they, so far as he knew, meant that it should continue.

All that we learn from Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians concurs with what we learn from the New Testament and Clement. We find in it no evidence for Prelacy, and clear proof of Presbyterian principles. The letter runs in the name of Polycarp and the presbyters who are with him; and without straining, we may fairly say that this expression just as naturally implies that these presbyters were his colleagues as that they were his subjects.* But the main point is, that the epistle distinctly intimates that the church of Philippi was at this time under the government of presbyters and deacons, while there is not a hint of the existence, past, present, or prospective, of any other and higher functionaries. This is the more important, because we find in the New Testament, that when, about sixty or seventy years before, Paul wrote to the same church, it was under the government of bishops and deacons, as we see from the first verse of his epistle, —no doubt the same as the presbyters and deacons of Polycarp's time. This combination of the scriptural and the ex-scriptural evidence in regard to the church at Philippi has sadly perplexed the Episcopalians. Some of them, such as Dr Hammond—a man of much more learning than sense or judgment—contend that the bishops of whom Paul speaks were bishops in the modern sense of the word, that is, prelates; but that Philippi was a metropolis, and had an archbishop, the bishops being the suffragans of the province, and the primate or metropolitan himself being either dead or absent at the time when Paul wrote. But the more judicious among them admit that these bishops were just presbyters; and they add that the bishop, properly so called in the modern sense, must have been either dead or absent when Paul wrote, *or*, that a prelate had not yet been appointed, the episcopate being still exercised by the apostle himself. But unfortunately it appears from Polycarp's letter, written about seventy years after, when the apostles were all dead, that the church of Philippi was *still* under the government of presbyters and deacons, without any trace of a bishop. What is to be done with this difficulty? Why, we must just *try to suppose* again, that the bishop was either

* Πολυκαρπος και οἱ συν αὐτῳ πρεσβυτεροι.

dead or absent. Bishop Pearson says, and it is literally all he has to say upon the point: "Sed quis dabit Episcopum Philippensium tunc in viris fuisse? Quis præstabit Philippenses ideo a Polycarpo consilium non efflagitasse, quod tunc temporis Episcopo ipsi haud potirentur?"* Presbyterians are not bound, and certainly will not undertake, to produce proof, as Pearson demands, that the Bishop of Philippi was then alive. It is quite enough for us that there is no trace of the existence of any such functionary in the church of Philippi—no evidence that they had had, or were again to have, a prelate to govern them; while it is further manifest, that if the reason why they asked Polycarp's advice was, as Bishop Pearson chooses to imagine, because the see was vacant at the time, it is not within the bounds of possibility that there could have been no hint or trace of this state of things in the letter itself. Philippi surely should be admitted to be *another* exception. Its government was likewise clearly Presbyterial, and this too after all the apostles were dead, and, consequently, after all the arrangements which they sanctioned had been introduced. So far, then, as concerns the *only* two apostolic men, of whom it is generally admitted that we have their remains, genuine and uncorrupted, it is evident that their testimony upon this point entirely concurs with that of Scripture,—that they furnish no evidence whatever of the existence of Prelacy,—and that their testimony runs clearly and decidedly in favour of Presbyterial government; and if so, then this is a blow struck at the root or foundation of the whole alleged Prelatic testimony from antiquity. It cuts off the first and most important link in the chain, and leaves a gap between the apostles and any subsequent Prelacy which cannot be filled up.

Ignatius is the stronghold of the Episcopalians in regard to this period. We have already explained the grounds on which we think it impossible to believe that those parts at least of Ignatius' epistles, which speak of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, could have been written by him. It speaks in a style upon this subject, which is not only very different from that of Clement and Polycarp, but which is entirely unexampled during the whole of the second century; and he inculcates obedience to bishops, presbyters, and deacons, especially to bishops, with a frequency and

* Pearson's "Vindiciæ," P. ii., p. 168.

an absoluteness that are utterly opposed to the whole spirit of the apostles, and the whole scope of their instructions; and that are, indeed, very offensive. We need not go over this ground again. We are not convinced that all the epistles of Ignatius have been proved to be wholly forgeries, but we are persuaded that Daillé's argument upon this particular point is unanswerable; and that it has been conclusively defended by Larroque against the objections of Pearson, though Episcopalians continue to boast till this day that Pearson has never been answered. It has been conjectured —and there is nothing improbable, but the reverse, in the conjecture—from the anxious solicitude which the epistles of Ignatius manifest upon this point, that those parts of them at least were fabricated at the time when Prelacy, or something like it, was beginning to spread in the church, and were intended to throw the sanction of the venerable name of Ignatius around the pleasing innovation. This idea was first thrown out by Salmasius, and it is thus expressed in a valuable work by a recent author, which contains a great deal of useful information in a convenient form: "If the epistles are entirely genuine, they prove the very opposite of that for which they are adduced—the apostolic origin of Prelacy. For here we see a child parading a new toy, of which he thinks he can never make enough. . . . The extreme anxiety to obtain submission betrays a consciousness of a novel assumption, for which the early extension of the church at Antioch, probably, gave both occasion and encouragement."*

We would only further observe, that while the epistles of Ignatius prove that at the time when they were composed, or put into their present form, at whatever time that may have been, a real distinction among bishops, presbyters, and deacons, so that they formed three distinct orders or classes of office-bearers, had been introduced, or was in the very act of being introduced, they contain no clear intimations of what were the distinct functions, provinces, and prerogatives of these different orders. It seems pretty plain that even then the bishop was but the pastor of a single congregation, while there is no clear evidence that the presbyters—whom, however, he greatly magnifies, as well as the bishops—were pastors or ministers of the word. Hence some Presbyterian writers, in discussing Ignatius, have taken up the

* Bennett's Theology of the Early Christian Church, p. 20.

ground that, even admitting his epistles in their present form to be genuine and uncorrupted, they are quite reconcilable with Presbyterian principles,—the bishops being the pastors, and the presbyters our ruling elders. I cannot say that I attach much value to this mode of disposing of the testimony of Ignatius, though it has been adopted by some respectable Presbyterian writers. The whole *usus loquendi* of the second century is decidedly opposed to an explicit and uniformly recognised distinction among three different classes of office-bearers; and as soon as we find unequivocal and genuine proofs of this distinction, we find also evidence that the presbyters were pastors, though there are certainly difficulties to be met with in tracing the progressive history both of the episcopate and the presbyterate, which the existing materials of antiquity do not enable us fully to solve.

Soon after the middle of the second century, we find plain enough traces of the existence of some distinction between bishops and presbyters: *i.e.*, we find that, whereas these words had been used indiscriminately, when applied to ecclesiastical office-bearers, for a century both of inspired and uninspired writers, they were now *sometimes* applied to designate two somewhat different classes of persons; and though we have not materials for determining very fully what the precise difference between them was, we have sufficient materials for deciding that it was very unlike the distinction between bishops and presbyters in modern Prelatic churches. The distinction between Ignatius, who lived in the beginning of the second century, on the one hand, and Irenæus, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen, who flourished from the middle of the second to the middle of the third century, on the other, is this, that he uniformly uses the words bishops, presbyters, and deacons, as designating three different classes, while they *all* sometimes distinguish them, and sometimes confound them, or use them synonymously,—thus clearly proving, that in their time the distinction, though it existed, was neither very great in itself, nor very much regarded, nor very constantly observed. There is no evidence that Irenæus, Tertullian, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Origen believed that bishops were, by divine appointment, a distinct class or order of office-bearers from presbyters: no proof can be produced from their writings that this was generally the mind of the church during their life, while not a little can be produced from them which fairly leads to the

opposite conclusion; though it must be admitted that, from the subject not having been during all this period discussed controversially, there is some ambiguity and obscurity about their statements, and some ground for dispute as to the precise nature and amount of the conclusions which they warrant. The general result of a comparison of all the various indications upon this subject, contained in the writings of this period, is this, that while at first bishops or presbyters and deacons were the only two classes of office-bearers in the church, the presidents or moderators of the presbyters came to assume, or had conceded to them, an increasing measure of power or authority; and that this gradually led to a general restriction of the name bishop to the president, while the name presbyter was continued to the other pastors. The words, however, are still sometimes used indiscriminately by all these writers. It is perfectly certain that during all this period the churches were still governed by the body of presbyters, acting substantially as colleagues; that the bishops were not regarded as constituting a distinct superior order; that no separate ordination, or consecration, as Prelatists call it now, and nothing but the united choice of the presbyters and the people, was necessary to make a presbyter a bishop. If this be so, then assuredly bishops, till the middle of the third century, were not prelates, and the evidence adduced in support of Prelacy from this period does not bear upon the proper point in dispute.

Here it may be proper to advert to a very common misrepresentation of Episcopalians. One can scarcely open a work in defence of Prelacy, without finding it asserted, that the most learned Presbyterians admit that Prelacy existed as early as the middle of the second century, from which they think themselves entitled to draw the inference that it must have existed in the apostolic age. And in support of the allegation that learned Presbyterians make this admission, they will probably quote two or three short garbled extracts from Salmasius and Blondell, which have been handed down as an heir-loom from generation to generation among Episcopalian controversialists. The statement is wholly untrue. Neither Salmasius nor Blondell, nor any other learned Presbyterian, ever admitted that *Prelacy, in the modern sense, existed as early as the middle of the second century.* All that they have admitted is, that about that time there are traces of a distinction being *sometimes*, though not uniformly, made in

the use of the words bishop and presbyter, indicating, no doubt, that the presidents of the presbyteries were beginning to assume greater prominence and influence, while they strenuously deny that at that time bishops were at all like modern prelates, either in the *potestas ordinis* or in the *potestas jurisdictionis*, which they assumed and enjoyed. In regard to Blondell and Salmasius more particularly, they maintain that, during the first half of the second century, the moderatorship of the presbytery went by seniority, the oldest minister presiding, and when he died the next oldest taking the chair; that this custom was generally changed about the middle of the second century, and the practice was then introduced of appointing a president by free choice, instead of by seniority. They do not admit that this president, though the name bishop began soon to be in a great measure restricted to him, was regarded as belonging to a distinct superior order; that he had anything like even a veto or negative over the proceedings of the presbytery, or that he was possessed of any exclusive powers or prerogatives. They believed, and they have proved, that it was only after a long train of gradual and growing usurpations, not completed till more than two centuries after this period, that the primus presbyter, who had the *πρωτοκαθέδρια*, or moderator's chair, was transmuted into a prelate; and yet they are constantly quoted by Episcopalian controversialists, as admitting that Prelacy existed in the middle of the second century.

The great battle-field, however, is the Cyprianic age, the period during which Cyprian held the see of Carthage,—*i.e.*, for ten or twelve years immediately after the middle of the third century. The government of the church during Cyprian's time has been discussed at great length; and we formerly mentioned some of the principal works on the subject, recommending especially Jameson's "Cyprianus Isotimus." Episcopalians usually affirm with great confidence that Cyprian's writings prove that in his time proper Prelacy prevailed in the church. It cannot be denied that in Cyprian's writings we have abundant proof that in his time there was a clear and palpable distinction between bishops and presbyters, that he very strenuously inculcated the superiority *in some sense* of bishops over presbyters, while there is good reason to believe that he contributed in no small degree to advance the process of the progressive elevation of bishops, which had no doubt been going on from a very early period, and, indeed, we may almost

say since the time of Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence. There is no evidence, however, that Cyprian, with all his zeal and earnestness in maintaining the prerogatives of the episcoptee, believed bishops to be of divine appointment—a distinct superior order to presbyters—that he claimed for them anything like the exclusive government of the church, or that he held that there were any ecclesiastical acts to the performance of which presbyters without a bishop were intrinsically incompetent. If bishops are to be held to be by divine right a superior distinct order from presbyters, it is quite plain what are the scriptural grounds upon which the doctrine *must* be based—those, viz., on which modern Prelatists usually defend their principles. Now, it is remarkable that in all Cyprian's earnest argumentation and vehement declamation in defence of the bishop's prerogatives—a point which he evidently laboured with all his heart—there is not the slightest allusion to any one of the common arguments of modern Prelatists, except that derived from the Jewish priesthood; and even this is not commonly applied as they apply it. His sole argument is taken from those obscure and mystical notions of unity to which we formerly referred, which led him to ascribe a certain primacy to Peter over the other apostles, and to the Bishop of Rome over the other bishops, while yet he explicitly contended that all the apostles and all the bishops were possessed of an equal measure of proper authority or jurisdiction. The superiority which he ascribed to bishops over presbyters he rests upon the same grounds, and defends by the same arguments, as the superiority which he ascribed to Peter over the apostles; whence the inference is unavoidable, that if he really understood his own principles, he did not intend to ascribe to bishops any real superiority of order or proper jurisdiction over presbyters, any more than to Peter over the apostles, though he might not be so anxious to bring out the conclusion explicitly in the one case as in the other. There is nothing in Cyprian to countenance what may be called the doctrine of Prelacy, viewed in connection with the scriptural grounds on which it is commonly based; nay, the entire absence of them from Cyprian's discussion of this point, proves that they had not then entered into men's heads—that they had not yet been invented—that they were utterly unknown.

As to the practice of the church in his time, all that is proved by it is, that there was then a marked distinction between bishops

and presbyters; that the bishop was the fixed president of the presbytery; that it was expected that ordinarily they would pronounce no ecclesiastical judgment, and perform no ecclesiastical act, without his consent and approbation, while he also ordinarily did nothing without theirs. Cyprian expressly informs us that he acted upon the principle of doing nothing without the consent of his presbytery, which consisted only of presbyters; and that, in matters of importance, he must also have the consent of the people,—restraints these upon episcopal domination, which modern Prelatists would ill brook, and which a man of Cyprian's high spirit and exalted notions of episcopal prerogatives would not readily have acknowledged and submitted to, unless the general doctrine and practice of the church of that time had imperatively required it. No satisfactory evidence has been produced, that the bishops in Cyprian's time claimed and exercised, as belonging to them inherently and *de jure*, a veto or negative over the proceedings of the presbytery, although this seems generally to have been, in fact, conceded to them; and still less of anything like evidence has been produced, that there were any ecclesiastical functions which presbyters could not then validly perform, and to which the bishop's actual presence was necessary. The Cyprianic bishop, then, was not a modern prelate, though the horns of the mitre were certainly appearing; and it was still true that, as Jerome, the most learned of all the fathers, assures us had been the case from the beginning, the churches were governed *communi consilio presbyterorum*, instead of presbyters being deprived of all share in the ordinary administration of ecclesiastical affairs, as they now are in the Prelatical Churches of England and Ireland.

The only thing else produced in support of Prelacy from primitive antiquity is, that some writers of the first three centuries have spoken of particular individuals as being bishops of particular churches, and as having been made so by the apostles; and that some of them speak also of a personal succession of bishops in particular churches. The inference is, that it was then generally believed that the apostles established bishops with Prelatic jurisdiction, and that there was a regular succession of *such* bishops from the apostolic times. The falsehood of this conclusion is clearly established by what we find in the epistles of Clement and Polycarp; and there is no difficulty in detecting the fallacy of the argument on which it is based. The fallacy lies in these two

points: First, in not making allowance for the unquestionably vague and equivocal use of the word bishop, and in imagining that whenever it occurs in ancient writers, it means a modern prelate; whereas nothing is more certain than that, in Scripture and primitive antiquity, it bore no such restricted and specific meaning: And, secondly, in not taking sufficiently into account that, as the word bishop came gradually to be restricted to the presidents or moderators, as distinguished from ordinary presbyters, men naturally applied the style of speaking common in their own age to the events and transactions of preceding generations, when they had occasion to describe or refer to them. The fair application of these two considerations, deprives that argument in favour of Prelacy of all weight, and even plausibility.

Let us advert to an instance: Irenæus speaks of Polycarp having been made Bishop of Smyrna by the apostles, and of a succession of bishops preserving the tradition of sound doctrine in the churches. Some distinction, in the occasional use of the word bishop and presbyter, with some corresponding difference in dignity or authority, existed in his time; but there is no proof that he regarded them as designating two distinct and separate orders; and, consequently, there is no proof that he thought Polycarp the Bishop of Smyrna to be like a modern prelate; besides that, in another passage, he expressly calls him an apostolical presbyter. While he speaks of a succession of bishops, he speaks also as frequently and as explicitly of a succession of presbyters, as representing the churches, and handing down the apostolic doctrine,—a fact of great importance in illustration of the doctrine of the second century upon this point. And in addressing the Bishop of Rome, he speaks of him and his predecessors in the Roman church as presbyters,—a mode of speaking which no genuine modern Episcopalian would ever think of employing in regard to the Bishop of Rome, or even in regard to his Grace of Canterbury.

With respect to the catalogues of the succession of bishops in the principal churches from the apostolic times, which Eusebius laboured to compile in the fourth century,* it is enough to say that the general observations now made apply equally to them; and that, in addition, Eusebius has distinctly confessed that, from

* Euseb. Hist. Eccles., Lib. iii., c. iv. Stillingfleet's Irenicum, p. 297.

want of records, no certainty could in his time be attained regarding the materials of which they were composed.

What is it that can really be held to be proved upon this point? Why, first, that in the age of Clement and Polycarp—the age of the apostles, and that immediately succeeding them—the government of the churches was "clearly Presbyterial." Secondly, that in another generation, after the middle of the second century, we have some traces of a distinction being sometimes observed between the words bishop and presbyter, which had ever before, both by inspired and uninspired men, been used indiscriminately; that bishop was now often used to designate specially the president or moderator of presbyteries, while, at the same time, all pastors, including the presidents or moderators, were still often called by the general name of presbyters; and while there is not yet any trace of these bishops arrogating to themselves the exclusive right of performing any ecclesiastical function or administering the ordinary government of the church, except in conjunction with the presbyters over whom they presided. Thirdly, that in the Cyprianic age, or the latter part of the third century, there is no proof of any very material change in the government of the church from what it had been for a century before,—the difference being chiefly that the distinction between bishops and presbyters was more regularly and carefully observed; that the power of the bishops as presidents of the presbytery was somewhat more prominent and more extensive; but still there is no proof that there were any ecclesiastical functions exclusively appropriated to the bishop which presbyters could not perform without him, or in his absence; that there is not yet any satisfactory evidence that bishops alone administered ecclesiastical affairs in the exercise of an inherent power, regulated by their own judgment, or even that they had *de jure*, though practically they often seem to have now exercised *de facto*, a veto or negative over the proceedings of the presbytery. These are the facts of the case, as they can be,—as we are firmly persuaded they have been,—established by an investigation of the whole evidence; and if so, there was nothing like modern Prelacy in the second century,—and only a faint and feeble shadow of it, very different from the coarse and palpable reality, even in the latter part of the third century.

Now, the whole plausibility of the Prelatic argument from antiquity, depends upon the alleged universality of its prevalence

from the apostolic age downwards. This universal prevalence, however, is not only denied, but disproved. Could it be proved that proper Prelacy, in the modern sense, universally prevailed in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, this would be rather a startling fact, and, *had we no other evidence* of the apostolic arrangements, might be entitled to considerable weight. But the scriptural evidence, that the apostles established only two ordinary permanent offices in the church, is complete and conclusive; and, even if it were not, there is nothing in the testimony of antiquity,—in the facts which it establishes,—that affords even a presumption that they instituted a third and higher one. We see no trace of a third order in the generation immediately following theirs,—(of course we reject, for reasons formerly explained, the testimony of Ignatius upon this subject),—and we can trace thereafter, upon historical grounds, the formation and development of a third or higher order, through a period of more than two centuries, so fully as to leave not a great deal to be filled up by an appeal to the operation of the recognised principles of human nature, and to the general tendencies unquestionably exhibited in the history of the church during that time. We might concede a great deal more to Episcopalians than a fair view of the evidence requires, as to the origin and growth of Prelacy. We might concede, though it cannot be proved, that there were traces of a distinction between bishops and presbyters earlier than the middle of the second century, and even in the time of Ignatius (and let it be remembered that *some* distinction or superiority, without specifying what, is all that even his epistles indicate); and we might further concede, that a century later, in Cyprian's time, proper Prelacy, in the modern sense of the word, was in full and general operation; and yet, after conceding all this, we could not infer that there was any proof, or even any very strong presumption, that Prelacy had been established by the apostles. The evidence for the early and general prevalence of Prelacy is not such as to impose upon us an obligation to give any explanation of its growth and origin in order to escape the necessity of referring it to the apostles. But, even if it were, there would be no difficulty in explaining it. The history of the church exhibits from the very first a strong tendency to declension from the scriptural standard both in doctrine and government. So far as government is concerned,

the tendency, fully developed at length in the system of Popery, was to invent new offices or orders of office-bearers, to increase and extend the power or authority of individuals, to devise high-sounding titles, and to fabricate distinctions and differences, as pretences or excuses for applying them, and to convert what were originally mere titles of honour or marks of respect, into the grounds of claims to actual power or jurisdiction. Nothing but wilful blindness can fail to see *these* tendencies in operation in the history of the early church, even during the first three centuries; and if they existed at all, they are fully adequate, when viewed in connection with well-known and powerful principles of human nature, the operation of which is too often exhibited even in the conduct of those whom we cannot but regard as pious men, to account for the origin and growth of Prelacy, even though it could, in its proper sense, be proved to have had a much earlier and more general prevalence than can be truly ascribed to it. Prelacy, or rather *some* distinction between bishops and presbyters,—some superiority of the one over the other,—was one of the earliest and most respectable of these inventions, but there is no ground to look upon it in any other light.

Besides these general considerations,—which are of themselves quite sufficient to account for the whole facts of the case, and which would be quite sufficient to account for a great deal more, even for all, or nearly all, of what Episcopalians commonly assert to be matter of fact, if it could be established to be so,—we know enough of the state of the primitive church to be able to give a more specific explanation of the rise and growth of the superiority of bishops over presbyters, without needing to refer it to apostolic appointment. The men who had been settled by the apostles, or with their sanction, as the first pastors of churches, would naturally be looked upon with deference and respect by the other pastors who might be afterwards associated with them, would probably preside at their meetings, and have much actual influence in the regulation of all ecclesiastical affairs. They would naturally, and almost as a matter of course, be led to occupy a position of prominence and influence, and would be looked to by others as virtually representing in some measure the presbyters, and the churches or congregations over which they presided. This prominence and influence, and not any pretended higher order or superior right of jurisdiction, was, no doubt, the whole of the

Prelacy enjoyed by Clemens, Bishop of Rome, and Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna; and though it is essentially different in its whole character, elements, and foundation, from modern Prelacy, there is no difficulty in seeing how easily and naturally, when extended to another generation, and fostered by special circumstances in the condition of particular churches, and in the character and position of individuals, it might produce such a state of things as would naturally lead to an appropriation to the presidents of the presbyteries of one of the two designations which had formerly been common to all the members. The pastors of the early Christian churches were chiefly settled in towns, where they seem to have lived very much in common, transacting by joint authority the necessary ecclesiastical business; and as they extended their labours to neighbouring villages, and formed churches in them, these new churches seem for a time to have been supplied and superintended by the pastor or pastors of the city, through whose labour they had been planted, and thus to have been kept in some measure of dependence upon, and subordination to, the mother church, and the presbyter or presbyters who had most influence in managing *its* affairs. The presidency of the presbytery, and the control exercised over the new churches settled around the mother church, were thus evidently the foundations on which the structure of Prelacy was raised; and there is no difficulty in conceiving how, on this basis, might be constructed the whole progress which took place in this matter from the condition of the church of Corinth in the time of Clemens, to that of the church of Carthage in the time of Cyprian. The common allegations of the advocates of Prelacy about the impossibility of accounting for its origin and prevalence, unless we refer it to the apostles, are destitute of any solid foundation in the principles of human nature or the history of the church, even if we were to concede the accuracy of the representation they usually give of the actual facts of the case; but when we take into account how the matter of fact actually stands upon this subject, they become really ludicrous, and almost unworthy to be discussed in sober argument. Nothing is more natural, nothing more easily explicable, than the unquestionable progress which took place in this matter during the second, third, and fourth centuries.

It may be worth while to notice here one rather curious specimen of the tactics of Episcopalians in the management of this

branch of their cause. When they are discussing the general *status questionis*, they talk as if they were contented with a very scanty measure of superiority on the part of the bishops over the presbyters—as if they were perfectly satisfied with any distinction between them, however small, that could be in any sense called imparity or superiority of any kind. And so, in like manner, when they are investigating the remains of antiquity for the purpose of establishing the early and general prevalence of Prelacy, doing their best to make the most of every phrase or incident they meet with, they profess to be quite satisfied, and even delighted with, the very scanty and meagre traces they can discern of *some* distinction obtaining between bishops and presbyters, however slight it be, and however imperfect may be the information conveyed or indicated as to its real nature and amount. But when they come to the last branch of the argument, and profess to be proving the impossibility of Prelacy having prevailed so early and so generally, unless it had been established by apostolic authority, they then change their course, and give a very different view of what Prelacy is. They then represent it as something greatly and palpably different from anything which Presbyterians can admit of, and of course as being, upon Presbyterian principles, an entire subversion of the apostolic government of the church. Having laboured to make this impression, they then proceed to enlarge upon the awful sin of making so great and radical a change upon apostolic arrangements, and the injustice and unfairness of charging this fearful crime—as upon Presbyterian principles it must be—upon the pious and holy martyrs of antiquity. And then they go on—professing to think that Presbyterians allege that Prelacy was introduced suddenly and all at once—to show, that even if these pious and holy men could have been guilty of so great a sin as to subvert deliberately the government which the apostles established, it was impossible that they could all at once have succeeded in introducing so great and fundamental a change. Jameson describes this feature in their conduct in this way:* "One would think, that at the beginning, they plead only for as good as nothing; and that the thing they would have is no bigger than the cloud which was like a man's hand; but afterward the whole heaven of the Kirk of God is black with it."

* Sum of the Episcopal Controversy, p. 184.

We may give a specimen of this mode of procedure on their part. The famous Chillingworth, so deservedly celebrated for his writings against the Papists, in which he proves himself to be a singularly acute reasoner, wrote a short tract, which he called "The Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy Demonstrated." He begins with a very moderate definition of what is meant by Episcopal government, abstracting, he says, "all accidentals," and considering "only what is essential and necessary to it." This definition of Prelacy, *of course*, contains nothing about a distinct order of men vested inherently with superior jurisdiction, or the exclusive power of ordaining. He then tries to show, which he does partly by perverting two extracts from Beza and Du Moulin, that "this government was received universally in the church, either in the apostles' time, or presently after," and that, therefore, "it cannot with reason be denied to be apostolic." The conclusion he puts in this form: "When I shall see therefore all the fables in the Metamorphosis acted, and prove true stories; when I shall see all the democracies and aristocracies in the world lie down and sleep, and awake into monarchies; then will I begin to believe, that presbyterial government, having continued in the church during the apostles' times, should presently after (against the apostles' doctrine, and the will of Christ) be whirled about like a scene in a masque, and transformed into episcopacy. In the meantime, while these things remain thus incredible, and in human reason impossible, I hope I shall have leave to conclude thus:—Episcopal government is acknowledged to have been universally received in the church presently after the apostles' times. Between the apostles' times and this presently after, there was not time enough for, nor possibility of, so great an alteration. And therefore there was no such alteration as is pretended. And therefore episcopacy being confessed to be so ancient and catholic, must be granted also to be apostolic. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*" *

Chillingworth could reason when he liked, and could reason admirably when he had a good cause to plead; but if he had produced nothing better than this, Locke would assuredly not have said, as he did say, "If you wish your son to be a good reasoner, let him read Chillingworth." The fallacy of the reasoning, independently of other and more serious objections to its principles,

* The Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy Demonstrated, sec. xi.

consists to some extent in the erroneous representation it insinuates of the views of Presbyterians on the topics which it includes. They dispute with him his account of the state of the question, and regard his account of it as little better than a juggle, to obscure and perplex the real merits of the controversy, or as an unmanly evasion of its real difficulties. They never imagined or asserted that Prelacy started into life fully grown, and was suddenly and all at once established over the church; on the contrary, their firm persuasion is, that it took from three to four centuries to attain to the maturity which it exhibits in modern times; and they do not need, in explaining its gradual rise and progress, in so far as they are at all called upon to explain it, to ascribe to any one generation in the church a larger measure of ignorance or sin, of indifference and unconcern about Christ's arrangements, and of love of power and pre-eminence, than is compatible with a large measure of Christian zeal and excellence, or than can be conclusively proved to have been exhibited in early times in other matters besides this.

Prelacy was not established by the apostles, for there is no proof of it in the New Testament. They established only two orders of ordinary permanent office-bearers—presbyters and deacons; and by *uniformly* using the words bishops and presbyters interchangeably, as both descriptive of one and the same class of office-bearers, and by giving us no hint whatever of any other intended permanent office, they, of course, designed that, in taking the word of God for a guide, and applying it for a standard of faith and practice, the church should adhere to the Presbyterial government which they, in accordance with their Master's directions, had established. Their immediate successors adhered to the apostolic mode, and retained their Presbyterian principles and practice. Gradually some measure of superior influence and authority came—perhaps from good motives or plausible professions of benefit to the church, and not at first from mere vulgar ambition and open disregard of Christ's arrangements—to be conceded to the presidents of the presbyters, who were also usually the pastors of the original or mother church of the district. A state of things, in some measure new, was thus introduced, which, of course, required to have some name or designation by which it might be represented and described; and this was effected by restricting, though at first without anything like regularity or

uniformity, the word bishop to the higher class, and leaving the word presbyter to the inferior.* This unquestionable deviation from the apostolic and inspired use of the words, does, according to all the recognised principles which regulate the formation of language, necessarily imply the existence of a different state of things from that which the apostles established and left. A change was made in the use and application of the words, to indicate and express a change which had previously been introduced into the actual administration of ecclesiastical affairs,—a change which, in its progressive development, required the invention of several new words and titles, until the world at length became familiar both with the name and the reality of a universal bishop,—a sovereign pontiff,—the head of the church,—the vicar of Christ upon earth. If they had adhered rigidly to the apostolic arrangements, they would not have needed to have changed the apostolic phraseology.

A great deal of ingenuity has been employed by the defenders of Prelacy, from Epiphanius down to the present day, to account for the uniform interchangeableness and manifest identity of the words bishops and presbyters in the New Testament, and the distinction afterwards introduced between them. Some half-dozen of theories, with various subsidiary modifications, have been devised to account for it, and it is not very easy to say which of them is now most generally adopted by Episcopalians. These different theories are possessed of different degrees of ingenuity and plausibility; but they are all destitute of any solid foundation, either in actual historical evidence or in intrinsic probability, as might be easily shown. The only satisfactory explanation is, that in apostolic times the *offices* as well as the *names* of bishops and presbyters were thoroughly identical, and were designed to continue so; that a difference was afterwards introduced into the actual state of matters in the government of the church; and that this difference in the things required and produced a difference in the usage of the names. The principles of human nature, the lessons of experience, the informations of the history of the church, suggest abundant materials for establishing the entire probability of such a change. There is nothing in the least unlikely about it. So likely, indeed, is Prelacy to arise in the church

* Mason on Episcopacy.

from causes which are in constant and powerful operation, that we regard it at once as a subject of surprise and gratitude, that the evil has not again found its way into the Reformed churches; and we have no doubt that this is to be explained, under God, by the deep impression produced by the history of the early church as to the imminent danger of tampering with God's appointments, and of deviating *at all* from the scriptural standard,—of yielding in any measure in ecclesiastical arrangements to the suggestions of worldly policy or of carnal ambition.

It would be out of place to be dwelling upon the general tendency of Prelacy, as manifested in history, to obstruct the welfare of the church, and to injure the interests of religion. But I must briefly advert to what are the principal direct charges which we have to adduce against it, and which we think we can fully establish.

First, it introduces a new and unauthorized order of office-bearers into the church. The church is Christ's kingdom—He alone is its sovereign—He has settled its constitution, and established its laws, and He has revealed His whole will to us concerning all these matters in His written word. No one is entitled to prescribe laws to the church, or to fix its office-bearers, except Him who has purchased it with His own blood; and all its arrangements should be regulated by the constitution which He has prescribed. He has given us no intimation of His will that there should exist in His church a distinct class of office-bearers superior to the ordinary pastors, whom He has authorized and required to feed the flocks over which the Holy Spirit hath made them overseers. And if He has given no intimation of His will that His church should have a superior order of office-bearers to pastors, then no such order ought to exist; and where it has crept in, it ought to be expelled. It is an interference with His arrangements, a usurpation of His prerogative, for any one to introduce it. Episcopacy, indeed, did not present itself as the introduction of a new order of office-bearers, to those who took the first steps that led to its establishment. It was at first merely conceding a somewhat superior measure of dignity or authority to one of the presbyters over the rest, without its being imagined that he thereby ceased to be a presbyter, or that he became anything else. But this led gradually to the notion that he held a distinct superior office, and then the word of God was perverted in order to get some countenance to the innovation. It was, as Jerome

assures us, a device of men, who, in the exercise of their wisdom, thought it well fitted to guard against schism and faction, though at first it was far from assuming that aspect of palpable contrariety to God's word which it afterwards presented. The remedy, as has happened in other cases, proved worse than the disease. Prelacy was not attended with the divine blessing, and the wisdom of man continued to make progress in improving upon God's plans and arrangements, until the great body of the professing church became an entire apostasy; Christ's authority was trampled under foot, and His great design in establishing the church was in no small measure frustrated by men who professed to act in His name, and to be administering His laws. So dangerous is it to deviate from the path of Scripture, and to introduce the inventions of men into the government and worship of the church of the living God.

Secondly, another serious ground of charge against Prelacy,—though, indeed, it is virtually the same charge in another form,—is, that it deprives the pastors of churches of the power and authority which Christ has conferred upon them. It is surely abundantly evident in Scripture that pastors have a power of ruling—of exercising a certain ministerial authority in administering, according to Christ's word, the ordinary necessary business of His church; and we have irrefragable evidence in Paul's address to the presbytery of Ephesus,* that he contemplated no *other* provision for the government of the church, and the prevention of schism and heresy, than the presbyters or bishops faithfully discharging *the duties of their office* in ruling as well as in teaching. But no sooner was a distinction made between bishops and presbyters, than the bishops began gradually to encroach upon the prerogatives of the presbyters, to assume to themselves more and more of the power of ruling or of administering all ecclesiastical affairs, until at length, though not till many centuries after the apostles' times, the presbyters were excluded from any share in it, and became the mere servants of their lords the prelates. This led also to an inversion of the scriptural views of the relative dignity and importance of the functions of teaching and ruling, and to a practical elevation of the latter above the former—Scripture always giving the first place, in point of dignity and importance, to the function of teaching. Accordingly, we now see that,

* Acts xx.

in the Prelatic Churches of England and Ireland, not only are presbyters deprived of all power of ruling, or of exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and thus stripped of privileges and prevented from discharging duties which Christ has attached to their office; but it seems, practically at least, to be generally supposed that teaching and preaching the word, which the apostles manifestly regarded as their highest honour and their most imperative duty, is beneath the attention of those dignified ecclesiastics who lift their mitred heads in courts and parliaments, and should be left to the common herd of presbyters,—the mass of the inferior clergy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

THE only topic now remaining in order to complete our proposed survey of the doctrine of the first three centuries is that of the Trinity,—a subject of the highest interest and importance. We have reserved this to the last, chiefly because it connects most closely with the subjects which must occupy our attention in surveying the doctrinal discussions of the fourth and fifth centuries—the Arian, Nestorian, and Eutychian controversies.

Sec. I.—*Testimony of the Early Church on the Trinity.*

When the Arian controversy arose in the fourth century, both parties claimed, in support of their opposite doctrines, the testimony of the earlier church, though the orthodox party advanced this claim with greater confidence and greater truth. And in more modern times, whenever the subject of the Trinity has become matter of controversial discussion, the question has been agitated as to what were the views that generally prevailed in the early church, or during the first three centuries, regarding it. There seems to have been something like a general feeling upon the part of theological writers, even those who in general were not disposed to attach much weight to catholic consent, that it was a matter of more importance to ascertain what were the views generally held by the primitive church on the subject of the Trinity, than upon any of the other topics which we have already considered,—a sort of general admission that the testimony of the early church would have rather more of a corroborative, though, of course, not probative, influence in support of the side which might enjoy the benefit of it, in this than in most other controversies which have been agitated. And this feeling or impression is perhaps not altogether destitute of some foundation in reason.

The doctrine of the Trinity—*i.e.*, the doctrine that there are three distinct persons possessing one and the same divine nature and essence—is one which is altogether of so peculiar a character, that we cannot help having an impression that it is in the highest degree improbable,—first, that if it had been taught by the apostles, it would have soon disappeared from the general teaching of the church; or, secondly, that if it had *not* been taught by them, it would have been afterwards devised or invented by men, and would have so widely and extensively prevailed. On the ground of the first of these positions, we concede to the anti-Trinitarians, that if it should turn out that the doctrine of the Trinity was not generally believed by the early church, this would afford a certain degree of presumption, though of course no proof, that it was not taught by the apostles; while, on the ground of the second of these positions, we call upon them to admit, that a proof of its general prevalence in the early church affords at least an equally strong presumption in favour of its apostolic origin. None of the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity imagine that men can be reasonably expected to embrace this doctrine,—which, from its very nature, must be one of pure revelation,—unless it can be clearly established from Scripture; and they are all persuaded that if the divine authority of Scripture be admitted, and if it be further admitted that the authors of the books of Scripture understood what they wrote, and meant to write so as to be understood by others, the doctrine of the Trinity can be fully established. But there is nothing unreasonable in the general idea that the prevalence in the early church of a doctrine of so very peculiar a character—so very unlikely to have been invented by man—should be regarded as affording some presumption in favour of the soundness of the conclusions that may have been deduced from Scripture. At the same time, it is true, as might have been expected, that most of those who have believed that the doctrine of the Trinity is taught in Scripture, have also believed that the testimony of the early church is in favour of it; while, on the other hand, most of those who have succeeded in persuading themselves that the doctrine of the Trinity is *not* taught in Scripture, have been equally successful in reaching the conclusion that it was not generally adopted by the early church.

Some collateral or adventitious influences, indeed, have occasionally been brought to bear upon the investigation of this subject

—of the faith of the early church concerning the Trinity—which have broken in upon the regularity with which theologians have ranged themselves upon the one side or the other, according to their own personal convictions as to the truth of the doctrine itself. More especially, the discussion of the question of the faith of the early church on the subject of the Trinity has been brought to bear upon the more general question of the respect due to the authority of the fathers, and even upon the subordinate question of the comparative respect due to the testimony of the ante-Nicene and the post-Nicene fathers; and men seem to have been somewhat influenced in deciding upon the Trinitarianism or anti-Trinitarianism of the early church by the views which they felt called upon to maintain in regard to the general question. As we cannot enter into a minute examination of the precise meaning of passages in early writers, very often obscure and confused; and as, after all, the subject is now important, chiefly, perhaps, from the prominent place it occupies in modern theological literature, I may illustrate the statement about the cross currents of influences in affecting men's opinions upon the subject by one or two examples.

Dionysius Petavius, or Denis Petau, whom I have already had occasion to mention, a very learned and able Roman Catholic writer in the early part of the seventeenth century, and profoundly versant in patristic literature, has given it as his deliberate opinion, that a clear and decided testimony against Arianism cannot be produced from the existing remains of the first three centuries; nay, that many of the fathers of that period were no better than Arians, and that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity —which, like all Romanists, he professed to believe—was first brought out fully and clearly at the time of the Council of Nice. And this declaration of Petavius has been since boasted of by anti-Trinitarians as a concession wrested from a very learned adversary by the pure force of truth and evidence. Bishop Bull, the most eminent among the champions of the orthodoxy of the ante-Nicene fathers,* after expressing his surprise and amazement that a man like Petavius—*vir magnus atque omnigena literatura instructissimus*, as he calls him—should have propounded such an opinion, intimates his conviction that he was not influenced in

* Defensio Fidei Nicænæ, p. 9.

adopting it by a pure love of truth, but *subdolo aliquo consilio*, and then proceeds to explain how this view was fitted to serve the purposes of Popery, in this way: First, its tendency was to elevate the authority of the post-Nicene fathers—whom Petavius and all others acknowledge to have been generally Trinitarians—above that of the ante-Nicene fathers, and thus to afford to the Papists a pretence for shifting their general controversy with Protestants, so far as antiquity is concerned, from the first three centuries, where they can find little to support them, to the fourth and fifth centuries, where there is a good deal to countenance them; and, Secondly, the establishment of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity by the Council of Nice, without its having much support from previous tradition, and its general adoption thereafter by the church, give some countenance to the principle, which has been advocated by some Popish writers, of the right of general councils to form and establish new articles of faith. The word of God and the history of the church make it manifest that there is no great improbability of finding, and no great lack of reasonable charity in expecting to find, abundance of fraud and iniquity in the defenders of Popery. But I think it must be admitted in fairness, that in this case the suspicions of Bishop Bull are far-fetched and unreasonable, and that there is no sufficient reason to doubt that Petavius may have believed what he said about the Arianism of many of the ante-Nicene fathers,—the testimony of the primitive church not being quite so clear as to exclude the possibility of an honest difference of opinion. Romish writers have not, in general, adopted this notion of Petavius; but, on the contrary, have been accustomed to adduce the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, as instances of the obscurity and imperfection of Scripture, —instances of doctrines very obscurely and imperfectly revealed in the word of God, but clearly established by the testimony of the early church, supplying the deficiencies of Scripture. This also was the ground generally taken upon the subject by the Tractarians; and hence the real amount and worth of the testimony of antiquity to the doctrine of the Trinity, or rather the comparative clearness of the scriptural and the ecclesiastical testimony upon the subject, has come to be involved in recent controversies. Accordingly, Goode, in his Divine Rule of Faith and Practice, makes it his business to show that the scriptural testimony in

favour of the doctrine is clear, full, and explicit, and that the ecclesiastical testimony—which the Tractarians, following the Papists, had preferred, in point of clearness, to the scriptural proof—is confused and contradictory; and in the course of his discussion of this topic, he charges Bishop Bull with forcing some of the declarations of the ante-Nicene fathers into an orthodox sense, and censures him for his censure upon Petavius.*

When Bossuet published his great work upon the Variations of the Protestant Churches, Jurieu, who has written a great number of valuable works, especially upon the Popish controversy, but who was not free from a certain measure of rashness and recklessness, attacked his fundamental principle, that variation was a proof of error, by adducing the case of the doctrine of the Trinity, and bringing out the variations and inconsistencies of the testimony of the early church concerning it, of which, of course, he made the most; while Bossuet, in his reply, endeavoured to show that that testimony was uniform and consistent.

These may serve as illustrations of the way in which this subject of the faith of the primitive church, in regard to the Trinity, has been brought to bear upon other controversies, and of the way in which men's views regarding it have been modified by their opinions upon some other points than that of the truth of the doctrine itself. Still it is, in the main, substantially true, that those who are Trinitarians upon scriptural grounds, have generally regarded the testimony of the primitive church as corroborating their conclusions from Scripture; while those who were anti-Trinitarians on alleged scriptural grounds, have taken an opposite view of the bearing and import of the testimony of antiquity. It appears to me that the truth upon this point may

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* Goode, vol. i., c. v., sec. iv.; vol. ii. pp. 1–15.

Mr Newman, when only a Tractarian (*vide* Goode, vol. i., p. 272), denounced Petavius on this ground, that he "sacrificed without remorse" the early fathers "to the maintenance of the infallibility of Rome;" but after he became a Papist, in the introduction to his essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, he adopted in substance Petavius' views upon this subject, dwelling upon their errors and contradictions, almost avowedly out of regard to the objects the promoting of which Bull ascribes to Petavius.

Whitby's "Disputatio de S. Scripturarum interpretatione secundum Patrum Commentarios" illustrates the connection between the discussion of the general authority of the fathers, and their testimony on the Trinity. His three leading positions are given in the title-page.

be comprehended in these two positions: First, the testimony of the church of the first three centuries in favour of the doctrine concerning the Trinity, which has ever since been held by the great body of professing Christians, is sufficiently clear and full to afford some corroboration to the conviction based upon Scripture, that it was taught by the apostles; and Secondly, that it is not so clear and full as to be of any real service to those who would employ it for depreciating the clearness and sufficiency of Scripture; and that, on the contrary, there are much greater difficulties and drawbacks connected with it than have ever been proved to attach to the scriptural testimony. Let us briefly illustrate these positions.

The whole host of the opponents of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, assuming, though unwarrantably, the general designation of Unitarians, make common cause in discussing this question. When they profess to be interpreting Scripture, they divide into different ranks, and disagree as much with each other as they do with Trinitarians. But in discussing the testimony of antiquity they usually combine their forces, and seem all equally anxious to bring forward anything that may be fitted to afford a proof or a presumption that the early church did not generally hold the doctrine of the Trinity. This is scarcely fair, though perhaps it is not worth contending about. The three great divisions of the anti-Trinitarians—for this, and not Unitarians, is their proper generic designation—are the Sabellians, the Socinians, and the Arians. Sabellianism is now commonly used as a general designation for the doctrine of those who, admitting that a distinction in the Godhead is set forth in Scripture, deny that this distinction is a personal one, and maintain it to be merely nominal or modal;—or, in other words, who assert that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are just three different names for one and the same person, viewed under different aspects or relations. Now, it is certain that some notion of this sort was broached during the first three centuries by Praxeas, Noetus, and Sabellius, but it is not alleged that it ever had a general prevalence in the early church; in other words, it is not alleged that the testimony of the early church is in favour of Sabellianism. There never has been any considerable body of men, either in ancient or in modern times, who professed what are called Sabellian principles. There have, indeed, been occasionally individual theologians, who, while professing to

hold the orthodox and generally received doctrine of the Trinity, have given such explanations of the distinction in the Godhead, or rather have explained it so much away, as to subject themselves to the charge from other orthodox divines of advocating Sabellianism, and who may perhaps have afforded some ground for the suspicion that they virtually denied or explained away a true and real distinction of persons; just as there have occasionally been instances of theologians—orthodox, or intending to be so—who seem to have gone into the opposite extreme, and have *explained* the distinction in the Godhead in such a way as to afford some plausible grounds for charging them with Tritheism,—*i.e.*, with maintaining, not as the Scripture teaches, and as the great body of professing Christians have generally held, that there are three persons in the unity of the Godhead, possessing one and the same nature, essence, and substance, but that there are three Gods. Thus, about a century and a half ago, some discussions took place upon this subject in England, in which, on the one hand, Dr Wallis and Dr South were charged with having taught Sabellianism, or something like it; and, on the other hand, Dr William Sherlock, and Bingham, the author of the Christian Antiquities, who opposed them, were charged with having given some countenance to Tritheism. These were, however, not the formal and deliberate expressions of definite opinions held by bodies or classes of men, but rather incidental and personal aberrations, arising from attempting an unwarranted and presumptuous minuteness of explanation on a subject which, in many respects, lies beyond the limits of our comprehension. Socinians and Arians, indeed, are accustomed to allege that all but themselves must be at bottom either Sabellians or Tritheists; and to refer to the case of those who have been charged with Sabellianism as proof of the felt difficulty among Trinitarians of keeping up a profession of a real personal distinction, and to the case of those who have been charged with Tritheism,—*i.e.*, with holding the doctrine of three Gods, as distinguished from that of three persons in one Godhead,—as bringing out openly and plainly the real nature and practical import of Trinitarianism. This, however, is manifestly assuming the whole question in dispute; while at the same time it must be admitted, that it also illustrates the injury sometimes done to truth by the rash and presumptuous speculations of its advocates.

At present, however, it is enough to remark, that very few professing Christians, if any, have deliberately and intentionally advocated Sabellian principles, and that there is no pretence for alleging that the doctrine of the early church was Sabellian.

There remain the Socinians, who maintain that Christ was a mere man, who had no existence until He was born by ordinary generation of Joseph and Mary; and the Arians, who admit His pre-existence even before the creation of the world, but deny His proper divinity, His possession of the divine nature, His consubstantiality and co-eternity with the Father,—who, in short, represent Him as a creature, though prior in time and superior in rank and dignity to all other creatures. It is very manifest that these two classes of heretics, though both ranking themselves under the general designation of Unitarians, must put a totally different meaning from each other upon many statements of Scripture; and that, indeed, in regard to those passages which bear *merely* upon the point of Christ's pre-existence, without asserting His true and proper divinity (and there are some such), the Arians must differ wholly from the Socinians, and agree with the orthodox in the interpretation of them. It is equally plain, that when they appeal to the testimony of the early church, as many of both classes have confidently done, they must differ much from each other in the construction they put upon many of the statements of the fathers.

When the subject of the faith of the early church upon this point is started, we are fully entitled to put three distinct and separate questions, and to investigate each of these distinctly on its own proper ground: viz., first, Was it Socinian? secondly, Was it Arian? and, thirdly, Was it Trinitarian? The proof which has been adduced, that the faith of the early church was Socinian, —*i.e.*, that Christ was then generally regarded as a mere man,—is of a very meagre and unsatisfactory description, and is a good deal involved in the obscure and perplexing distinction, originating in Gnostic views, made between Jesus and Christ. Indeed, it depends mainly upon the alleged Socinianism of the Ebionites, and upon the further allegation that the Ebionites were not reckoned heretics by the generality of the church. That the Ebionites were generally reckoned heretics, and, indeed, just a branch of the great Gnostic sect, has been proved by conclusive evidence, while it is by no means certain that they, heretics as they were, held the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ. That they held that

Jesus was a mere man,—some of them admitting, and others denying His miraculous conception,—is certain; but it is about equally certain that, in common with the Cerinthians and other Gnostics, they held that Jesus was not Christ till a divine energy or emanation descended upon Him at His baptism, which left Him again before His crucifixion. This notion may be fairly regarded as a virtual testimony to the general doctrine of the church, that Christ was intimately connected with the divine nature—that there was in Him some combination of the human and the divine. Eusebius expressly declares, that the first who taught that Christ was a mere man, ψιλος ἀνθρωπος, was Theodotus, a currier, who flourished in the latter part of the second century; and we know also, that about the same time another person of the name of Artemon held similar opinions. There is some reason to think that both these men, as well as Paul of Samosata, about the middle of the third century, still retained something of the old Cerinthian or Ebionistic notion, that some supernatural, divine energy resided in the man Jesus, and, therefore, were not simple humanitarians, as they have been called, though they might be said to deny that Christ came in the flesh. But even if it be conceded that, in the full sense of the expression, as now commonly understood, they held Christ to have been a *mere* man, there is nothing in anything we know about them or their opinions, which affords any evidence that their opinions had any general prevalence in the early church. With respect to the personal history of Artemon we know nothing. With regard to Theodotus, we have respectable evidence that he was tempted to deny Christ by fear of persecution, and that, in order to excuse himself, he alleged that he had not denied God, but only a man; that he denied the genuineness of John's gospel, that his arguments from Scripture were directed solely to the object of proving that Christ was a man, which of course no Trinitarian disputes; and that he was excommunicated for heresy by Victor, Bishop of Rome, with the general approbation of the church.* There is no ground to believe that the views of Theodotus and Artemon were generally adopted, or had any considerable prevalence; on the contrary, they seem to have died away, until revived about the middle of the third century by Paul of Samosata, —a man noted also for that worldliness and secularity of character

* *Vide* Natalis Alexander, saec. ii., cap. iii., art. x.

which has always been a leading characteristic of Socinians,—and then condemned by a council at Antioch with the general approbation of the church. And then, on the other hand, we have the whole body of the ancient fathers declaring unanimously, as a point quite certain in itself and universally acknowledged, the pre-existence of Christ, His existence before He was born of Mary, and before the creation of the universe. The God-denying heresy, then, of Socinianism, or simple humanitarianism, has nothing of weight to appeal to in the testimony of the ancient church, which, on the contrary, clearly and fully confirms what is the plain doctrine of Scripture—that the Son existed with the Father before the foundation of the world.

We are now shut up to one alternative—the faith of the early church must have been either Arian or Trinitarian. Now, on this question, it should be at once conceded that there is greater difficulty in coming to a conclusion; that there are some anomalies at least, if not contradictions, in the proof, which are not very easily explained; and that, altogether, there is fairer ground for an honest difference of opinion. I have no doubt that the evidence in favour of the Trinitarianism of the early church greatly preponderates; that we are fairly entitled to hold that the doctrine of the Trinity was generally received in the church from the time of the apostles till that of the Council of Nice; and that this affords some corroboration of the correctness of the Trinitarian interpretation of Scripture. But it is just as evident, that there are not a few of the fathers, in whose writings statements occur in regard to Christ which it is not easy to reconcile with orthodox doctrine, and which, at least, afford abundant evidence that they did not always write very clearly or consistently, and of course have no claim whatever to be received as guides or standards of faith, in preference to, or even in conjunction with, the sacred Scriptures. The orthodox writers of the Nicene age admitted that, before the Arian controversy arose, and led to a more thorough sifting of the subject, some of the fathers spoke loosely and carelessly, and in such a way as sometimes to afford a handle to adversaries; while, at the same time, they strenuously contended that, practically and substantially, the testimony of most of them was in favour of orthodox views, and in opposition to the Arian heresy. This is very near the truth, and probably would not have been much disputed by Trinitarians, had not the foolish and indiscriminate admirers of

the early fathers refused to admit the qualifications of the statement, and represented *their* testimony in behalf of the divinity of Christ as *more* clear and satisfactory than that which we find in Scripture.

If we assume the truth of the doctrine which has been generally held by the church,—viz., that Jesus Christ is true and eternal God, and that He is also a man, a real partaker of human nature,—we have a key which, without difficulty or straining, unlocks the whole of the passages in the word of God which refer to this subject, and combines them in consistency and harmony; while no other doctrine fairly and fully embodies the combined import and result of the *whole* of what the Scripture teaches concerning the Saviour of sinners. Now, this cannot be said of the testimony of the fathers of the first three centuries, viewed in the mass; and it is here that, independently of the immeasurable distance between divine and human testimony in point of weight and authority, lies the difference between the testimony of Scripture and that of antiquity, in point of clearness and fulness. It can be proved that there is a great preponderance of evidence in the writings of the first three centuries in support of the truth that Christ is God, of the same nature and substance with the Father; but there are some statements in several of them which cannot be very easily explained by being applied either to His proper divinity or to His humanity. Bishop Bull has put forth all his learning and ingenuity in labouring to explain them in accordance with orthodox views, and has certainly made out a very plausible case; but I am not prepared to say that he has entirely succeeded. The passages here referred to are chiefly of two kinds: First, some which seem pretty plainly to deny His eternity, to ascribe an origin in time to His existence, and to represent Him as beginning to exist just before the creation of the world, immediately before what they called His προελευσις, or forthcoming from the Father to create the universe. This notion seems to correspond well with the Arian doctrine of His being the first and most exalted of created beings. Bull labours to show that those of the early fathers who have spoken in this strain, have also, in other places, ascribed to Him proper eternity, and of course should not be made inconsistent with themselves, if it can be helped; and that while they held that there was a special προελευσις, or forthcoming of the Son from the Father, just before the creation of the world, and for the purpose of creating it, they held also that this was not

regarded as properly the commencement of His existence, but that He was begotten, as the Scripture teaches, of the Father from eternity. Much plausibility is given to this solution of the difficulty by the proof which Bull adduces, that some of the Nicene or post-Nicene fathers, undoubtedly Trinitarian, such as Athanasius himself, held a sort of triple nativity of the Son,—viz., first, His eternal generation of the Father; secondly, His coming forth to create the world; thirdly, His descending in the fulness of time to assume human nature. Still there seems good ground to believe that some of the early fathers held that, while the Son might be said to have existed from eternity in the Father as His λογος, or reason, His distinct *personal* existence began with His coming forth to create the world.

The other class of passages which Bull seems to have felt to be still more perplexing, are those in which some of the fathers, while maintaining that it was the Son, and not the Father, who appeared to the patriarchs in the Old Testament history, assign reasons *a priori* for its being the Son and not the Father, which are scarcely consistent with their ascribing the same nature and perfections to them, and which seem to imply a denial of the Son's invisibility and immensity, or incomprehensibility in a physical sense,—*i.e.*, omnipresence.* And to these passages he has little else to answer than that they are inconsistent with what the same fathers have taught in other parts of their works. This, we think, he has shown to be the case; and though he has in this way built up the general argument in support of the great *preponderance* of evidence from antiquity for the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, he has not shown that that testimony is throughout clear and unambiguous; but, on the contrary, has been obliged virtually to admit that it is not so. I have no doubt that Bishop Bull has succeeded in the great leading object of his work,—*i.e.*, in defending the Nicene faith on the subject of the Trinity from the writings of the catholic fathers of the first three centuries; and I am satisfied, also, that the whole discussion which the subject has undergone since his time, has tended decidedly to confirm the view of the testimony of the early church which he advocates with so much learning and ability. But still I must say, that a careful perusal of Bull's work does leave the impression that he has occa-

* Bull, sec. iv., c. iii.

sionally been obliged, especially in regard to these two classes of passages to which I have referred, to have recourse to a degree of straining, and to employ an amount of ingenuity in sifting, piecing, and conjecturing, which might have modified his profound and somewhat irrational deference to the authority of the fathers.

At the same time, it ought to be remembered that these difficulties attach to the writings only of some of the fathers, and that the great body of them are full and unequivocal in asserting the proper divinity of our Saviour, as implying the consubstantiality and co-eternity of the Son with the Father, though not always with full precision of statement and perfect accuracy of language, —qualities which the history of the church seems to prove that uninspired men seldom or never even approach to, upon any topic, until after it has been subjected to a full and sifting controversial discussion. And it is to be remembered, that though Sabellianism and simple humanitarianism, or what we now call Socinianism, were somewhat discussed during the first three centuries, and were rejected by the church, Arianism did not, during that period, undergo a discussion, and was not formally decided upon by the church, till the time of the Council of Nice. In these circumstances, occasional looseness of statement and inaccuracy of expression became of little importance as affecting the general character and weight of the evidence; and the question being put on this general issue, Was the faith of the early ante-Nicene church Arian or Trinitarian?—and being brought to be decided by a combined view of the whole materials bearing upon its settlement,—it is clear that, though there is some room for ingenious pleading, and though some difficulties may be started, which, taken by themselves, cannot perhaps be all specifically and satisfactorily removed, the practical result of the whole body of proof in the mass is, that the early fathers regarded Christ, in whom they trusted for salvation, and for whose name's sake many of them were honoured to shed their blood, as raised infinitely above the highest of created beings,—as being, indeed, God over all, blessed for evermore.

Sec. II.—*Nicene Creed—Consubstantiality.*

We have seen that the Sabellian view of the Trinity, and the simple humanitarian or Socinian view of the person of Christ,

were broached and somewhat discussed during the first three centuries, and that they were generally, almost unanimously, rejected by the primitive church. The Socinian doctrine (for so for brevity we may call it) upon the person of Christ was defended in the fourth century by Photinus, but it was again rejected and condemned by the great body of the church, and soon disappeared. It attracted no further notice till near the end of the sixteenth century, when its revival by Socinus was represented by the Papists as one of the fruits of the Reformation, and afforded them a sort of pretence for alleging that the doctrine of the Reformers was just the revival of ancient heresies. Arianism had not been discussed or formally condemned during this early period; and, as we formally showed, there are some of the fathers of the first three centuries whose works contain statements of a somewhat Arian complexion, though the general testimony of the early church may be fairly said to be, upon the whole, decidedly in favour of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Arius seems to have been led to bring forth those views, which have ever since been called by his name, and which occupied a large share of the attention of the church during the greater part of the fourth century, in his zeal to oppose statements which appeared to him to be of a Sabellian tendency,—*i.e.*, to imply, or to tend towards a denying or explaining away of any real personal distinction between the Father and the Son. He certainly made the distinction between them sufficiently palpable; but it was by going so far as to deny any true and proper divinity to the Son, and reducing Him to the rank of a creature, produced in time, out of nothing.

The Arian positions which are expressly condemned and anathematized in the Nicene Creed, are: "that there was a time when the Son was not," or "did not exist;" "that before He was born He was not; that He was made out of nothing, or of things that are not; that He is of a different substance or essence (ὑποστασεως η ὄυσιας) from the Father; and that He was created, and liable to change or alteration." These positions manifestly deny anything like true and proper divinity to the Son, and reduce Him to the rank of a mere creature, whose existence, commencing in time, was precarious, and might, of course, be brought to an end by the same power which created Him. The Nicene Council not only condemned these positions, but they further asserted positively that He was begotten, not made; that He was

begotten of the Father, of the Father's substance or essence; that He was God of God, light of light, true God of true God, or, as it is sometimes expressed, very God of very God; and that He was consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father. These declarations explicitly assert the doctrines which have since been generally known under the names of the co-eternity and consubstantiality of the Son, and His eternal generation by the Father out of His own substance,—doctrines which have been held ever since by the great body of professing Christians, and which are explicitly asserted as being taught by the word of God in the standards of our Church. The name ὁμοούσιος, or the doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, is usually regarded as the great distinguishing peculiarity of the Nicene theology in regard to the Trinity, as virtually embodying the substance of what they taught upon this subject; and in directing our attention to this topic, there are three questions which naturally present themselves for consideration: First, What is meant by the Son's being declared to be consubstantial, or of the same substance, with the Father? secondly, Was the Nicene assertion of the consubstantiality an accurate declaration of a true scriptural doctrine? and thirdly, Was it a warrantable and expedient thing, as a matter of Christian wisdom, to adopt this language as a virtual test of orthodoxy upon the subject of the Trinity? And to each of these questions we would now advert.

There is no great difficulty in understanding what is meant by the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, that is, in so far as the subject is in its own nature comprehensible by our faculties, although, by reason of the feebleness of these faculties, viewed in connection with the exalted nature of the subject, it must be explained in some measure by negatives. Negatively, it implies that the Son is not a creature, formed out of nothing by a creating power, or out of any previously existing created substance. There was, of course, a time when, upon any other theory than that of the eternity of matter, no being existed but God, the One First Cause of all. This One First Cause created all beings which have since come into existence out of nothing, either mediately or immediately; and this distinction of mediate and immediate may be applied either to the agent or the subject of the process of creation,—*i.e.*, first, God may either have created all things by His own direct, immediate agency, or He may, per-

haps, *for anything which mere reason can very certainly establish,* have employed creatures already formed as His instruments in the creation of others; and, secondly, He may either have formed creatures immediately out of nothing, or He may have formed them mediately out of created substances which He had previously produced. But these distinctions do not in the least affect the substance of the matter, or at all modify the real meaning of what a creature or a creation implies. Creation is still the bringing into existence out of nothing of what had no previous existence; a creature is still a being radically and essentially distinct from, and inferior to, its Creator, and dependent wholly upon His good pleasure for the commencement and continuance of its existence.

Arius admitted that the Son was produced before all other beings, and held that He was God's agent or instrument in the creation of them all; but that still, as He was produced in time and out of nothing, He was, of course, a mere creature, having only a precarious or contingent existence. His followers sometimes honestly admitted that they held the Son to be a mere creature, and sometimes they denied that they held this; but when called upon to explain in what respects, upon their principles, He differed from a creature, or what there was about Him that took Him out of that class of beings, the only answer they could give was one which amounted to nothing, and was a mere evasion,—viz., that He was produced immediately by the Father, and that all other beings were produced immediately by Him (the Son, or *Logos*), and only mediately by the Father.* There is manifestly no intelligible medium between the creature and the Creator. All beings may be ranked under the two heads of created or uncreated; and created beings are those which have been produced, mediately or immediately, out of nothing, by the mere will of the Creator, and are dependent wholly upon His good pleasure for the continuance of their existence. The Son is not a creature, but consubstantial with the Father. The word ὁμοούσιος, or consubstantial, does not of itself express or indicate anything about the *communication* of the divine essence or substance by the Father to the Son; and *that* we leave at present out of view, intending afterwards to advert to it under the head of

* Bull, Defensio Fid. Nic.

the eternal generation. The word expresses merely this idea, that He does in fact possess the same nature, essence, or substance which the Father has, as distinguished from any created nature or essence; or, as Bishop Bull ordinarily describes its meaning,* that the Son is "non creatæ alicujus aut mutabilis essentiæ sed ejusdem prorsus cum patre suo naturæ divinæ et incommunicabilis." The exemption of the Son from the class of creatures necessarily implies that He is possessed of the divine nature, and, of course, has or possesses the divine essence or substance, or *that* in the one divine being which makes Him what He is, and constitutes Him the sole member of a class from which all other beings whatever are absolutely and unchangeably excluded.

In regard to the meaning of ὁμοούσιος, or consubstantial, we would only further remark, that there is good ground to believe that it was used by the Nicene fathers to denote something more than its mere etymology implies, and that its proper translation, as it was then commonly used, is not "of the same substance," but "of *one* and the same substance," "unius ejusdemque substantiæ." This distinction has more immediate reference to an attempt which has been made, especially by Curcellæus and Whitby, to show that the fathers, at least before the Council of Nice, held that the identity or unity of substance which they ascribed to the Father and the Son was not a numerical, but a specific identity or unity; *i.e.*, that the substance of the Father was the same as that of the Son, not in number, but in kind or degree,—"non numero sed specie,"—was a substance of the same general class or description, but not numerically one with it. This distinction serves no direct Arian object, but it has been introduced and applied in modern times to explain the language of the fathers, merely in order to involve the whole subject in confusion and perplexity, and to afford a pretence for insinuating against the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity something like a charge of Tritheism, as if it implied an assertion of three substances, the same, indeed, specifically; *i.e.*, in kind or in specie, but not numerically one, as distinguished from the scriptural doctrine of one and the same substance; *i.e.*, of a substance or essence numerically as well as specifically one, possessed by three distinct persons.† The word ὁμοούσιος, or consubstantial, by itself, does not

* Bull, Defensio Fid. Nic. † Waterland's First Vindication, Qu. 26.

necessarily imply more than a specific unity, or an identity in kind; and it might consist with Sabellianism or Tritheism, expressing in the one case a numerical, and in the other a specific, unity. It would not, however, in any sense, consist with Arianism, the heresy against which the Nicene Creed was directed; and it is plain at least, that this distinction, though employed by Curcellæus and Whitby to evade or mystify the testimony of ante-Nicene writers in favour of the orthodox doctrine, cannot be applied to the explanation or perversion of the Nicene Creed, since the Nicene fathers not only asserted that the Son was ὁμοούσιος with the Father, but also, moreover, that He was begotten of the substance (εκ της ὄυσιας) of the Father, and, of course, had a substance not only the same in kind, but numerically one with His.

The second question respects the accuracy of the Nicene phraseology, in declaring the Son to be of one and the same substance with the Father, as expounding a real scriptural truth. The substance of what we learn directly in Scripture concerning the Son is this, that the names, titles, attributes, and works of the one supreme God, are ascribed to Him; that they are ascribed to the Son in no inferior or subordinate sense from that in which they are ascribed to the Father; and that thus there subsists, in some most important and essential respects, an identity between them. This great fundamental truth is, of course, to be established only by a careful examination of the precise and exact meaning of scriptural statements,—an examination that must be conducted according to the principles and rules of sound criticism and the ordinary laws of language. *Every* thing depends upon the result of this examination—the materials which *it* furnishes. When the precise meaning of the scriptural statements bearing upon this subject has been ascertained, it is then proper to consider what is the substance of the doctrine taught upon the point, and to examine in what way, or by what propositions, the real scriptural doctrine may be most fully, most clearly, and most accurately expressed. This is, indeed, the process by which our whole system of theological opinions ought to be formed; and there is need for special care and caution in conducting this process, in regard to topics which can be known only from Scripture, and with respect to which there has been much difference of opinion as to the meaning of Scripture among those who pro-

fessedly admit its divine authority. But if it be indeed true that the names, titles, attributes, and works of God are ascribed in Scripture to the Son, and that not in any inferior or subordinate sense, but in the same sense in which they are applied to the Father; and if we find also in Scripture that the Supreme Being is jealous of His own honour, and will not give His glory to another, we are fully warranted in concluding, upon the authority of Scripture, that the Son is not comprehended in the class of creatures; that He belongs to a totally different order of beings; that He is of the same rank or order as the Father. This is just the same as saying that He has not a created nature or substance, but a divine nature or substance: or, in other words, that He possesses *that* nature or substance, because of the possession of which the Supreme Being is distinguished from, and raised infinitely above, all other beings.

The divine nature can be but one, and the Son, therefore, is possessed of the one divine nature. The unity of the divine nature, however, as distinguished from the nature of a creature, might be only a specific and not a numerical unity, and this nature might be possessed by more than one divine being; but the Scriptures plainly ascribe a numerical unity to the Supreme Being, and, of course, preclude the idea that there are several different beings who are possessed of the one divine nature. This is virtually the same thing as teaching us that the one divine nature is possessed only by one essence or substance, from which the conclusion is clear, that if the Father be possessed of the divine nature, and if the Son, with a distinct personality, be also possessed of the divine nature, the Father and the Son must be of one and the same substance; or rather,—for it can scarcely with propriety be called a conclusion or a consequence,—the doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father is just an expression or embodiment of the one great truth, the different component parts of which are each established by scriptural authority,—viz., that the Father and the Son, having distinct personality in the unity of the Godhead, are both equally possessed of the divine, as distinguished from the created, nature. Before any creature existed, or had been produced by God out of nothing, the Son existed in the possession of the divine nature. If this be true, and if it be also true that God is in any sense one, then it is likewise true,—for this is just according to the established meaning

of words, the current mode of expressing it,—that the Father and the Son are the same in substance as well as equal in power and glory.

The third question respected the propriety and the wisdom of adopting the position that the Father and the Son are of one and the same substance, and making it a test of orthodoxy. The Nicene fathers professed to take the word of God as their rule or standard, though they likewise give us their testimony that the doctrines which they embodied in this creed had been generally held by the church since the apostles' times. We are told by Athanasius, that when they commenced their deliberations they had some intention of embodying their decision upon the doctrines of Arius in the words of Scripture; but that, upon more careful consideration, especially of the fact that Arius professed to receive all the statements of Scripture as well as they, that he put his own construction upon them, and gave an interpretation of them in accordance with his own views, they directed their attention to the object of devising certain statements, which should be possessed of these two properties: first, that they accurately embodied the substance of what Scripture teaches upon the subject; and, secondly, that they involved a denial or contradiction of Arian views so clearly and explicitly, that no Arian would receive them, and which should thus be accurate tests of truth and error upon the subject. This was the object they aimed at, and I am persuaded that in this object they substantially succeeded. The first of these properties, of course, was of primary and fundamental importance; but the other also, if attained, would be of great value in effecting objects which the existing condition of the church, and a regard to the interests of truth, rendered it imperative on them to aim at. I have already shown, that, assuming it as fully established by an exact and critical examination of the precise meaning of scriptural statements, that the Son is truly, and in the highest sense, God, possessed of the divine nature,—this doctrine, viewed in connection with what the Scripture also teaches concerning the unity of God, is accurately expressed by declaring, as they did, the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son;—and I now, therefore, further assume that the great doctrine which forms the distinguishing peculiarity of the Nicene theology is really sanctioned by the word of God, and, of course, may be rightfully asserted and maintained.

The Arians of the fourth century professed to dislike the Nicene Creed for this, among other reasons, because it deviated from the language of Scripture, and introduced new words and phrases which the word of God has not explicitly sanctioned; and many since have continued to object to this and other similar documents upon the same ground. The objection is a very frivolous one; and when it does not proceed, as it too often does, from a dislike to the doctrines which the creeds and confessions objected to inculcate, is founded upon very obvious misapprehensions. So long as men, all professing to take the Scripture as their rule, deduce from it opposite doctrines, or put inconsistent interpretations upon its statements, it will be indispensably necessary, if they are to attempt to ascertain how far they agree with, and how far they differ from, each other, that they employ, in expressing their convictions, words different from those which are used in Scripture. It may be objected, that this implies that men can form or devise more clear, explicit, and unequivocal declarations of doctrine than the word of God furnishes. It must be admitted that this is implied in it; but it may also be maintained, that this is, in a certain sense, true, without any disparagement to the word of God, and its perfect sufficiency for all the objects which it was designed by its Author to effect. Different doctrines are revealed in the word of God with different degrees of clearness and fulness; and it was manifestly not God's purpose to make His word so clear and explicit, in regard to all the doctrines it contains, as to preclude the possibility of men possessed of intelligence and substantial integrity taking different views of the meaning of some of its statements. Men of talent, learning, and piety have denied that the New Testament teaches the doctrines commonly called Calvinistic; but no sane man has ever yet denied that the Westminster Confession teaches these doctrines,—a fact which may fairly be regarded as establishing the conclusion, that *in some sense* the latter teaches them *more* clearly and explicitly than the former. It is possible for men to ascertain whether other men agree with them in holding Calvinistic doctrines, and it is desirable and important that this should be ascertained; but this manifestly cannot be done while they confine their communications with each other to the use of mere scriptural language. So, in like manner, when Arius broached the doctrines which have since been called by his name, it became necessary for the church

in general to make it manifest whether or not they approved of his views; and if not, what they regarded to be the doctrines really taught in Scripture upon the point, as distinguished from, and opposed to, his errors. Arius professed, as they did, to believe all that was said in Scripture concerning the Son; and hence it became necessary that, if Arianism was to be condemned, and the truth opposed to its errors to be fully and explicitly set forth, other words than those contained in Scripture should be employed—words which, beyond all reasonable doubt, should convince all men competent to judge of them, that those who adopted and concurred in them, denied that the Son was a creature, or had a created and inferior nature; and, on the contrary, maintained that, while undoubtedly a distinct person from the Father, He was possessed of one and the same divine nature, and yet was not a second or distinct God. This they professed to do, by asserting that He is of one and the same substance with the Father; and the history of the Arian controversy, lasting as it did during the greater part of the fourth century, proves that they succeeded, to a very large extent at least, in the object they aimed at.

The most direct and proper ground on which the declaration of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father can be assailed is, by showing that this position does not accurately embody or express the substance of what is taught or indicated in Scripture upon the subject. This is the only objection that is entitled to much consideration, and, if established, is of course at once and conclusively fatal; a property which no other objection can possess. It would, however, be also a serious, though not necessarily a fatal objection, could it be proved that, as the Arians sometimes alleged, the word ὁμοούσιος was of equivocal signification,—that its proper meaning could not be very clearly ascertained or very fully established. All they could adduce to give plausibility to this allegation was, the fact that the word had been used in the preceding century in a Sabellian sense by Paul of Samosata, and that, in consequence, the disuse of the word had been recommended by the orthodox Council of Antioch which condemned him. And it is quite true, as was already remarked, that the word does not include or suggest a condemnation of Sabellianism, or an assertion of the opposite truth of a real personal distinction in the Godhead; but this was not the purpose

for which it was employed by the Nicene fathers, or for which it has been since employed by the orthodox church. It was intended to embody a condemnation of Arianism, and an assertion of the great scriptural truth which is opposed to it. The Arians not only knew that this was its intended object, but they saw and felt that this object it was admirably fitted to effect; for it is a very remarkable fact, that amid all the discussions which took place upon this subject, Arians and semi-Arians uniformly manifested a most intense and unwavering dislike to the word ὁμοούσιος, and to the doctrine which it so explicitly and unequivocally declared. Most of the different sections into which the Arians and semi-Arians split in the course of the fourth century, laboured to devise, and ostentatiously paraded, the highest and most exalted terms which they could consistently apply to the Son, and some of them professed to adopt most of the terms applied to Him in the Nicene Creed. The semi-Arians in general professed to concur in the condemnation pronounced by the Nicene Council upon those who asserted that there was a time when He was not, or who maintained that He was a creature, made out of nothing. Some of them went so far as to profess to regard Him, not only as God, but as the true God: in short, they professed to say, in regard to Him, almost everything which the Nicene fathers had said; but none of them ever would admit the doctrine of the consubstantiality.

During some portion of the fourth century, through the influence of the Emperors Constantius and Valens, a large part of the professing church was overrun with Arian or semi-Arian heresies; so that it was said, "Unus Athanasius contra orbem,"—and that Jerome declared,* that the whole world groaned, and wondered that it had become Arian. During the period, many Arian and semi-Arian councils were held, and a considerable number of creeds were adopted by them. We have still extant several creeds, for example, prepared under Arian and semi-Arian influence, in councils held at Antioch, Sardica, Sirmium, and Ariminum; and the great facts concerning them are these: first, that they all, without exception, omit the word ὁμοούσιος, or any expression of similar import; and, secondly, that there are some of them with respect to

* Jerome adversus Luciferianos.

which this single omission is the only very intelligible or palpable difference between them and the one at Nice,—so that there are even some of them in regard to which it has been ever since a subject of controversy, whether they ought to be regarded as orthodox or not. The more bold and honest Arians said that the Son was ἑτεροούσιος, of a different substance from the Father; others said that He was ἀνόμοιος, unlike the Father; and some, who were usually reckoned semi-Arians, admitted that He was ὁμοιούσιος, of a like substance with the Father; but they all unanimously refused to admit the Nicene phraseology, because they were opposed to the Nicene doctrine of the true and proper divinity of the Son, and saw and felt that that phraseology accurately and unequivocally expressed it, though they sometimes professed to adduce other objections against the use of it. They made many attempts to appear to come as near as possible to the orthodox doctrine, without really committing themselves to its fundamental distinctive principle; but the word ὁμοούσιος acted like Ithuriel's spear in detecting all their shifts and manœuvres, and in holding them up to the world as opposers, whatever they might sometimes pretend, of the true and proper divinity of the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. It was like the anchor that held the orthodox faith in steadiness and safety amid the fearful storms of more than half a century, which elapsed between the first and the second œcumenical councils. It was a barrier against which neither force nor fraud could prevail, and which, in so far as anything of the kind could effect it, may have been said to have kept God's truth pure and undefiled, until the calamity had overpast, and a period arrived more favourable to the open profession and maintenance of the true doctrine which He has made known concerning His Son. I do not know that the history of the church presents to us another instance in which the wisdom and expediency of any particular doctrinal deliverance have been so fully established by experience. The history of the fourth century most fully proves that the Nicene fathers acted wisely,—that is, acted under the guidance and direction of Him who is the God only wise,—when they embodied in their creed or declaration that the Son is consubstantial with the Father. The Arians were never able to pervert it into an accordance with their views, but were obliged ever to admit that it unequivocally condemned them. It thus fully served the purpose for which it was intended, and

acted as a discriminating test between truth and error. The Lord blessed it, and made it the means of preserving His truth when it was exposed to imminent danger; and it continues to this day, in the symbolical books of almost all orthodox churches, to be regarded as a precise and accurate exponent of the great doctrine of our Lord's true and proper divinity.

There is, indeed, one slight deduction to be made from the statement now given, of the beneficial effects of the assertion of this doctrine, and the use of this phraseology,—*i.e.*, from the proof from experience of the wisdom and expediency of the adoption of it as a test of orthodoxy. There do seem to have been some persons in the fourth century who, while holding the substance of the orthodox doctrine in regard to the person of Christ, in opposition not only to Arians but to semi-Arians, had difficulties about adopting the word ὁμοούσιος; so that while it fully served the important purpose of detecting and excluding all Arians, it did not quite so fully effect the object—which is also of great importance in a matter of this sort—of uniting and combining all who agreed with the sacred Scriptures, and with each other, in regard to the substance of the doctrine. This was no doubt a partial evil, and it was to be regretted, both for the sake of truth and for the sake of the individuals themselves. The number of these individuals, however, who held the substance of the Nicene doctrine, but objected to the phraseology in which it was expressed, was very small,—and the evil, therefore, was very inconsiderable; while the advantage was incalculable that resulted from the possession and the use of a definite phraseology, which shut out *all* the supporters of error, combined *nearly all* the maintainers of truth, and formed a rallying-point around which the whole orthodox church ultimately gathered, after the confusion and distraction occasioned by Arian cunning and Arian persecution had passed away.

It is interesting to notice that some of the most zealous champions of orthodoxy during the Arian controversy knew how to temper their zeal for fundamental truth with a reasonable forbearance for the difficulties and infirmities of individuals; and that they did distinguish between differences as to the substance of the great doctrine of our Lord's true and proper divinity, and differences about some minor points in the mode of explaining it, and in the phraseology employed in doing so. It is generally said, that the adoption of the word ὁμοιούσιος, of a *similar* substance,

as distinguished from ὁμοούσιος, of the *same* substance, is the discriminating characteristic of the semi-Arians—of those who wished to appear to come as near to orthodoxy as possible, without actually adopting it; and this is, to a large extent, though not universally, true. Athanasius and Hilary, two of the most zealous defenders of the Nicene Creed, have both distinctly admitted that there were men in their time who scrupled to employ the word ὁμοούσιος, and preferred that of ὁμοιούσιος, who yet held the substance of the orthodox doctrine upon the subject, and were therefore to be treated as brethren in the faith—weak brethren, it might be—but still not as enemies of the truth. It was reckoned, and justly, a mark of some measure of error or misconception, a just cause of suspicion which required to be purged away, that men should object to asserting an identity of substance between the Father and the Son, and prefer asserting only a similarity. Still this was not to be held to be of itself conclusive against their orthodoxy. Hilary, one of the ablest and most strenuous defenders of the Nicene doctrine, laboured to show that ὁμοιούσιος was not only in fact used in preference to ὁμοούσιος by men who were in the main orthodox on the subject of the person of Christ, but, moreover, that it fairly admitted of a good and orthodox sense, *i.e.*, of substantially the same sense as ὁμοούσιος. He says: "Caret igitur similitudo naturæ contumeliæ suspicione: nec potest videri Filius idcirco in proprietate paternæ naturæ non esse, quia similis est; quum similitudo nulla sit, nisi ex æqualitate naturæ: æqualitas autem naturæ non potest esse, nisi una sit. Una vero non personæ unitate, sed generis. Hæc fides pia est, hæc conscientia religiosa, hic salutaris sermo est, unam substantiam Patris et Filii idcirco: non negare, quia similis est similem vero ob id prædicare, quia unum sunt." * "Similarity of nature, then, is far from suspicion of unsoundness; nor can the Son appear to be non-participant of His Father's nature, merely because He is like Him, since there is no similarity except from equality of nature, and there cannot be equality of nature except it be one—one, indeed, not in unity of person, but of kind or species. This, then, is a pious faith—this a religious conscience—this a sound

* Natalis Alexander, saec. iv., Diss. xv. The Greek of the passage from Athanasius, and reference to Hilary are given in Gieseler, § 81, vol. i., p. 200 of Cunningham's translation; and § 83, pp. 345–6 of Davidson's. *Vide* Hampden's Bampton Lectures, Lec. iii.

mode of speaking, not to deny one substance of the Father and the Son, because it is like; and to assert that the substance of the Son is like that of the Father, because they are one."

Athanasius has the following statement upon this subject, which is honourable to him, and fitted to teach us a useful and important lesson. "This," says he, "may suffice for refuting those who assail the Council of Nice, and attack all its proceedings. But with respect to those who receive the other decisions of the council, but have a difficulty about the ὁμοούσιος, we ought not to treat them as enemies: for we are not to identify them with the Arians, or to proclaim open war against them, but to discuss the matter with them as brethren, because they have really the same doctrine as we, and dispute only about words; for since they profess that the Son is of the substance of the Father, and not of any other substance,—that He is not a creature, but the true and natural offspring of the Father, and that He existed with the Father from eternity,—they are not far removed from the ὁμοούσιος." It was certainly an act of great weakness,—originating, probably, to some extent in pride or prejudice, not very creditable to the parties themselves, and decidedly injurious to the interests of truth,—that men who honestly believed all this should scruple about the word ὁμοούσιος; but cases of an analogous description have occurred in all ages in which there has been anything like free investigation. They have occurred not only in regard to this doctrine, but also in regard to others; and where the cases really are analogous,—*i.e*, where there is good ground to think that the substance of the true scriptural doctrine is honestly believed,—they ought to be spoken of and treated in the way of which Athanasius has here set us an edifying example.

Sec. III.—*The Nicene Creed—the Eternal Sonship.*

The propositions which are directly and immediately taught us in Scripture on the subject of the Godhead are these: that there is one God—that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God; and from these propositions, directly taught in, and conclusively established by, Scripture, we draw the inference that these three—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—are the one God. The Scriptures bring these three before us as distinguished from each other, and as distin-

guished from each other in a way that bears some analogy or resemblance to that in which three different persons among men are distinguished from each other, so that they might be marked out by the application to them of the distinct personal pronouns, *I*, *Thou*, and *He;* and upon this ground we consider ourselves fully warranted in saying, as is said in our Confession of Faith, in the sense which has already been fully explained, that in the unity of the Godhead there be three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. When it is further said in the Confession, that these three persons are "of one substance, power, and eternity," this, of course, is intended to set forth some of the leading positions which are implied in or result from, and thus explain the great general doctrine that they all possess the one Godhead, or the one proper divine nature. If God be one, and if the Son be God, and the Holy Ghost be God, they must possess equally with the Father the one undivided and indivisible divine essence or substance, and they must possess equally all divine perfections, such as power and eternity; or, in the language which has been commonly employed by orthodox divines, the three distinct persons in the one Godhead or divine nature are consubstantial, co-equal, and co-eternal.

To this general description of the Trinity in unity, or of three persons possessing the one divine nature or essence, and the same divine perfections, it is added in the Larger Catechism (Quest. 9), that they are "distinguished by their personal properties." Now, this statement introduces an idea over and above what is necessarily implied in the position that they are three distinct persons. All that is implied in the general position, that they are three distinct persons, so far as we are warranted and qualified to explain it, is this: that they are distinguished from each other in a way somewhat analogous to that in which three different persons among men are distinguished from each other, so as to admit of the distinct personal pronouns, I, Thou, and He, being applied to them respectively; and the true ground of the position is this general consideration, that the scriptural representations upon the subject are manifestly fitted, and *of course* were intended, to convey to us this general conviction and impression. The position that they are "distinguished by their personal properties," conveys to us something fuller and more specific than this, with respect to the nature, or rather the manifestations and conse-

quences, of the distinction; and *if true*, it affords ground for this position, that there is something which may be predicated of each of the persons that cannot be predicated of the rest. These two things are correlatives. *If it be true* that the three persons are distinguished by their personal properties, then it follows necessarily that there must be something about each of them that cannot be predicated of the others; and, *e converso*, if it can be proved that there is something predicable of each of them that cannot be predicated of the others, then we are fully warranted in deducing from this fact the general doctrine *necessarily involved in it*, that they are distinguished by their personal properties. Now we hold, and undertake to prove, that the Scripture warrants us in maintaining that there is something predicable of each of the persons which cannot be predicated of the others; and when we have proved this specifically and in detail, we consider ourselves fully warranted in laying down the general position that they are distinguished by their personal properties, which is nothing more than embodying in a general statement the substance of scripturally proved facts. Accordingly, the Larger Catechism, after asserting that they are "distinguished by their personal properties," puts the question, "What are the personal properties of the three persons in the Godhead?" and the answer is, "It is proper to the Father (*i.e.*, it is a peculiar, distinguishing property of the Father, predicated of Him, and not of the other two persons) to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity;" or, as it is expressed in the Confession, "The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son." Now, what is here asserted concerning the Father and the Son, and their mutual relation, as well as distinguishing properties, constitutes the substance of the doctrine which has been generally held by the church in all ages under the name of the eternal generation of the Son by the Father, or the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ; and it has been held just because it was believed that it could be fully proved from Scripture that the Son was eternally begotten of the Father.

The Nicene fathers did not stop short with asserting, in opposition to Arius, that the Son was of one and the same substance with the Father; they further declared that He was begotten—

not made or created—that He was begotten of the Father, and of the Father's substance, and that thus He was "God of God, *θεός ἐκ θεοῦ*, light of light, true God of true God." This is manifestly an assertion of a doctrine different from that of the consubstantiality, and additional to it; and the same general questions may be propounded concerning this additional doctrine as those which we have already considered under the former head. This doctrine plainly implies in general that the second person in the Godhead stands in the relation of a Son to the first person, with reference to His divine nature; that there was a generation or begetting, by which the Father in some sense communicated the divine nature, essence, or substance to the Son, and the Son of course derived or received it from the Father, so as to be even as God—a Son and begotten. This was clearly the doctrine which the Nicene fathers intended to teach, and it has been generally received ever since by most orthodox churches, under the designation of the eternal Sonship or filiation of Christ, or the eternal generation of the Son, or *Logos*. Bishop Bull discusses it under the head of the *subordination* of the Son to the Father, as to His *origo et principium*, and shows that both the ante-Nicene fathers and the post-Nicene, while asserting the perfect equality of the Father and the Son in nature and in all perfection, were accustomed to speak of the Father as being the *ἀρχή*, the *αἰτία*, the *auctor* of the Son, the *origo* or *fons* (*πηγή*) of the divinity which the Son possesses. The use of the word *subordination*, however, even when thus explained and limited, has been generally avoided by orthodox writers, as fitted to suggest ideas inconsistent with true and proper divinity, and to give a handle to the Arians. As the leading idea intended to be conveyed is just the communication from eternity in some mysterious and ineffable way of the divine nature and substance by the Father to the Son; and as the main ground on which the doctrine rests is the position, that Christ is represented in Scripture as being a Son, and as being generated or begotten, even as God, or in respect to His possession of the divine nature and perfections,—it is more common, and certainly more warrantable and becoming, to speak of the doctrine under the designation of the eternal Sonship or filiation of Christ, or the eternal generation of the Son by the Father.

I have said that this doctrine of the eternal Sonship or filiation of Christ, or the eternal generation of the Son (the same un-

doubtedly which the Nicene Council intended to teach in the quotations given from their creed), has been generally received ever since by most orthodox churches. At the same time, it must be admitted that there have been writers of eminence who have held the true and proper divinity of the Son, and His consubstantiality with the Father, but have rejected the doctrine of His eternal generation. They have been led to reject this doctrine partly from some abstract metaphysical reasonings,—which, however, I am persuaded can be proved to carry with them no more real weight in opposition to the eternal generation of the Son than other abstract reasonings of a similar kind possess, in opposition to His proper divinity,—and partly from a sensitive shrinking from what may appear presumptuous speculations upon a mysterious subject without clear warrant, as they think, in Scripture. These persons are accustomed to say, that all that is clearly revealed upon this subject in Scripture is,—that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God; and yet that they are not three Gods, but one God. If this be indeed all that is revealed in Scripture, then here we should stop, and content ourselves with explaining, illustrating, and defending this position; and this, as I formerly showed, is quite enough to warrant us in asserting the consubstantiality of the three persons in the Godhead. But as, on the one hand, we ought to beware of trying to be wise above what is written; so, on the other hand, we must guard against laying aside, or leaving out of view, anything which has really been revealed upon this point. In either case equally we are failing in making a right use and improvement of the word of God. Some of the fathers indulged in unwarrantable and presumptuous speculations about the relations of the persons in the Godhead; and this was carried to a far greater excess, and exhibited much more offensively, by the schoolmen, who were accustomed to discuss many questions concerning this subject which assuredly the word of God affords us no materials for deciding, and which may justly be regarded as not only presumptuous, but profane. This, combined with other causes, has led some modern writers to lean somewhat to the opposite extreme; and to leave out, or to refuse to take up, positions which there is good ground to believe that the word of God sufficiently warrants. Calvin, disgusted with the presumptuous speculations of the schoolmen, and having to contend in his own day both with

Sabellian and Tritheistic heretics, expressed a wish* that the names usually employed in discussing this subject were buried, and that men would be contented with believing and professing that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one God; and yet that the Son is not the Father, or the Spirit the Son, but that they are distinguished from each other by their personal properties; and in accordance with this feeling, he certainly spoke with some degree of doubt or suspicion of the eternal Sonship of Christ, though there is no sufficient ground for maintaining, as has been sometimes done, that he positively denied or rejected it.

It must be admitted that the fundamental truth upon this point,—that which stands clearly and prominently first, both in respect to the fulness of its scriptural evidence and its own intrinsic importance,—is the doctrine that the Son is God—truly and properly God—of one and the same substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory; and it may be admitted that men who believe this, and believe nothing more upon the point, may have correct views in the main of the leading principles of the scheme of redemption. Still, the Nicene fathers taught, and most orthodox churches have concurred with them, that there was another and a more specific additional truth revealed in Scripture upon this subject, and possessed of no inconsiderable intrinsic importance,—that, namely, of the eternal generation of the Son. Of those who, admitting the proper divinity of the Son (for it is with them only we have at present to do), have not admitted His eternal generation, some have contented themselves with saying that they saw no sufficient scriptural evidence of this latter doctrine, and therefore did not receive it into their creed; while others have gone further, and have maintained positively that the doctrine is false, nay, even that it is inconsistent with the scriptural doctrine of His true and proper divinity. Some of this latter class,—and especially the late Professor Moses Stuart of Andover, one of the first Biblical critics of the present day,—have taken some credit to themselves for being the most judicious defenders of Christ's proper divinity, and have imagined that they derived important advantages in the management of this great cause from casting off the doctrine of the eternal Sonship. The defenders of the eternal Sonship of Christ do not imagine that it can be established

* Inst., Lib. i., c. xiii., sec. v.

by any other evidence except scriptural testimony; but they believe that the scriptural testimony in its favour is sufficient and satisfactory; that there is no reason whatever why it should be rejected or explained away; and that the doctrine, instead of weakening or subverting that of Christ's proper divinity, tends greatly to confirm and illustrate it, as well as to throw light upon other important doctrines.

Those who positively deny or reject the doctrine of Christ's eternal Sonship, usually adopt a line of argument in opposing it, precisely analogous to that employed by Arians and Socinians in arguing against Christ's divinity. They begin with trying to prove by abstract reasonings, *a priori*, that the doctrine cannot be true; and then they proceed to what is in a great measure superfluous,—if they have really succeeded in establishing their first position,—to show that the scriptural statements on which the proof of the doctrine is commonly based are not sufficient to prove it. We have already admitted that the clearest and most fundamental truth upon this point is, that Christ is truly possessed of the divine nature, and of all divine perfections. All who hold this doctrine —and it is admitted by both parties in the discussion about the eternal Sonship—must of course admit that nothing can be truly predicated of Christ which contradicts, or is inconsistent with, His true and proper divinity. Now, the opponents of this eternal generation by the Father assert that this generation implies that the Father existed before Him in point of time, and that therefore He was not co-eternal with the Father; and also, that the derivation of His existence and substance from the Father by generation, in any sense, is inconsistent with that necessary existence which is an essential attribute of divinity. I am not called upon to enter upon a minute and formal investigation of this difficulty, and can only point briefly to the principal considerations by which it can, I think, be satisfactorily solved.

The fallacy of the argument lies in this, that it proceeds upon the assumption that generation,—and what it involves or implies when applied to the divine nature,—must be the same as when applied to men, and that the same or an analogous inference may be deduced from it in both cases. This is a mode of arguing which *all* the defenders of the proper divinity of Christ reject, when they are called upon to maintain that doctrine against *its* opponents. Arians and Socinians are accustomed to argue that,

as three persons among men are three different intelligent beings, so three persons in the Godhead must be three beings, or three Gods; and the answer which is reckoned sufficient by *all* defenders of our Lord's divinity is, in substance, that it is unwarrantable to argue in this way from the human to the divine nature; that what is true in regard to the one, may not be true, and cannot be proved to be true, in regard to the other; that we speak of three persons in the unity of the Godhead, just because this is the nearest approach we can make, by the exercise of our feeble faculties, and in the use of human language, to embodying or expressing a combination of a unity with a threefold distinction, —a combination which is clearly intimated to us in Scripture. In like manner, it appears to be intimated in Scripture—for we are entitled, in discussing this preliminary objection, to assume this—that the *Logos*, or second person of the Godhead, stands to the first *even as God* in the relation of Sonship, nay, in a relation expressly described in Scripture as Sonship; and we are fully warranted in putting aside as presumptuous and inadequate any preliminary objection to this doctrine, based upon difficulties which manifestly rest upon the application to a relation subsisting in the divine nature of notions derived from a relation called by the same name, because in some respects analogous, subsisting among men. We do not admit, and it cannot be proved, that generation in the divine nature *must imply* priority of existence in the begetter with relation to the begotten, or merely contingent as opposed to necessary existence in the Son; and in this way it may be shown that the preliminary objection to the eternal generation of the Son may be disposed of in the same way, and just as conclusively, as the preliminary objection to His proper divinity derived from the admitted unity of God.

Nay, there is one important aspect in which the answer to the objection in the former case has an advantage over the answer to the objection in the latter; and it is this: a distinction of persons —the subsistence of three persons in the unity of the Godhead—have not, *as phrases or expressions*, explicit scriptural sanction. They are used, and warrantably used, just because they seem best adapted of any expressions which human language furnishes, to embody or indicate what the Scripture unfolds to us upon the subject; whereas, if the doctrine of eternal generation has any foundation in Scripture—and that it has, we are entitled, as I

have said, to assume hypothetically at this stage of the argument—then we have the idea of Sonship expressly applied to the relation subsisting between the first and second persons of the Godhead. And, of course, we are thus entitled to allege that the relation which actually subsists between them,—*whatever may be its precise nature, however imperfectly it may have been revealed to us, and however inadequate our faculties may be to comprehend it*,—that this actual relation is that which truly and properly constitutes Sonship, or is the original idea or archetype of filiation. And, if so, it manifestly follows that we ought to regulate our conceptions of what sonship is and implies, not from the defective and imperfect representations of it given in the relation of fathers and sons among men, but from the original and only true idea of it as subsisting between the first and second persons of the Godhead. This view brings out most palpably the unwarrantableness and inexcusableness of deducing inferences from what generation or sonship involves or implies among men, to what it must involve or imply when regarded as subsisting between the persons of the Godhead. The eternal generation of the Son, then, just means the communication from eternity, in some ineffable and mysterious way, of the divine nature and essence by the first to the second person of the Godhead, in virtue of which the relation of proper paternity and proper sonship subsists between them, and is accordingly set before us in Scripture in the only way in which it could be unfolded, in language applicable to a human relation, which is, in some respects, though not in all, analogous to it. The proper Sonship of Christ, instead of suggesting any considerations inconsistent with His true divinity, most naturally and immediately suggests His being truly of the same nature and substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory.

As it may be truly said of the doctrine of the Trinity in general, that when it is once proved that it *may* be true,—*i.e.*, when it is once shown that it cannot be proved to involve a contradiction,—there is no difficulty in proving from Scripture that it *is* true; so it may with equal justice be said of the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ, that when it is once shown that it cannot be proved (for, of course, the *onus probandi* lies upon those who allege the objection) to involve anything necessarily inconsistent with His proper divinity—His co-eternity and co-equality with the Father—then there is no great difficulty in finding in Scripture

enough to establish its truth. The evidence depends mainly upon an investigation of the true meaning and application of the phrase, the Son of God, as it is used by the inspired writers; and more particularly, upon the decision of the question whether this designation is *ever* applied to Christ as God, or with an exclusive reference to His divine nature. If it appears that Christ, as God, is on any occasion represented in Scripture as the Son of God, then the controversy is settled; for this is nearly all that is meant by His eternal Sonship—that, as God, or in His divine nature, He stands in the relation of a Son to the first person of the Godhead. The opponents of the eternal Sonship of Christ allege, some of them, that the designation, Son of God, as applied to Him in Scripture, is descriptive, not of His nature, but only of His office as Messiah or Mediator; others, that it is properly descriptive of His human nature, upon the ground of His miraculous conception; while others, again, admitting, like the latter class, that it is a designation not merely of office but of nature, hold that it is applied to Him merely as a general description of His peculiar position and dignity, and intimate relation to God in His complex person, as θεανθρωπος, or God and man in one person. This last is the view taken of its import by Professor Moses Stuart of Andover,* who has laboured with great zeal to refute the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ, and whose erroneous views upon this point materially detract from the value of his other labours in establishing the proper divinity of Christ in opposition to the Socinians. The discussion of this subject, of course, opens up a wide field of critical investigation into the true meaning and import of a large number of the most important and interesting passages in the New Testament. On this field I am not called upon to enter; and it is the less necessary, as there is a very accessible book, published a few years ago, in which the whole subject is most fully and minutely discussed with great ability, and in an admirable spirit—I mean Treffry on "The Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ," where the doctrines which I have endeavoured briefly to state and explain are, Isthink, established by unanswerable evidence from the word of God.

It is important to keep in view, in surveying the scriptural evidence, that, if it clearly appears that *in any instance* the idea

* Commentary on Romans, c. i., p. 63.

of generation or sonship is applied in Scripture to our Saviour, with reference exclusively to His divine nature or His eternal relation to the first person of the Godhead, this is quite sufficient to establish the doctrine, even though it should appear that there are also passages in Scripture in which the designation, Son of God, is applied to Him with reference to His office and not His nature, or if to nature as distinguished from office, with a reference to His human nature, or to His complex person as θεανθρωπος, as distinguished from His divine nature, simply as such. It has been common among some divines to bring out and illustrate different grounds or modes of filiation, as they call it, said to be applied to Christ in Scripture, or various reasons on account of which He is there styled the Son of God, such as His miraculous conception, His mission and office as Messiah and Mediator, His resurrection from the dead, and the peculiar intimacy of fellowship which He enjoyed with the Father, and the pre-eminent power and glory to which He has been raised. Treffry's admirable work shows that some of these alleged modes of filiation or grounds of Sonship have no foundation whatever in Scripture,—*i.e.*, are not adduced and represented there as the reasons why Christ is called the Son of God; and that, in regard to all of them, the evidence is much more defective and uncertain than might at first sight appear,—that, in short, the ordinary and general, if not the exclusive, application of the title, Son of God, to Christ, describes or indicates a relation subsisting between Him and the first person of the Godhead from eternity. But even if we were to admit that all the different inferior modes of filiation which divines have enumerated were sanctioned by Scripture, the question would still remain, whether it does not also, *in addition*, exhibit and sanction another and higher mode of filiation, by representing Christ as being the Son of God with reference to His divine nature, apart from any other view, either of His nature or of His official position and privileges. If this mode of filiation, if this species and ground of Sonship, be sanctioned by Scripture, as we have no doubt it can be proved to be, then is the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ, or the eternal generation of the Son or *Logos*, fully established, whatever other inferior modes of filiation may be also brought before us in Scripture; and thus, of course, it becomes our duty to believe upon the authority of God, that there has subsisted from eternity, between the first and

second persons in the Godhead, a relation analogous in some respects to that subsisting between a father and a son among men, implying, as the human relation does, identity of nature and equality of order or dignity, but, of course, not implying priority in time as opposed to co-eternity, or contingency and dependence of existence as opposed to necessary and unchangeable existence, or, indeed, anything inconsistent with the full possession by the Son of true and proper divinity, and all which this involves.

There are not a few in our own day, who, under a profession of adhering strictly to the simplicity of Scripture, and indulging in no speculations which the word of God does not warrant, reject the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of the Saviour. The question, of course, must be decided by an appeal to Scripture, which alone can give any information upon a subject so mysterious, and so immeasurably raised above the cognizance of our unaided faculties; but we cannot help thinking, that just as Arians and Socinians come to the examination of the scriptural evidence of our Lord's proper divinity with their minds biassed by a previous conviction, upon grounds of abstract reasoning, that the one divine nature cannot be possessed by two distinct persons, so the opponents of the eternal generation of the Son come to the examination of the scriptural evidence upon this point with their minds biassed by a previous conviction, that there cannot subsist between two distinct persons in the Godhead a relation in *some* respects analogous to that subsisting between a father and a son among men.

We are persuaded, then, that the Nicene fathers were supported by the word of God, as well as by the testimony of the early church, in declaring that the Son was not only of one and the same substance with the Father, but also that He was eternally begotten by the Father of His own substance; and though we would not put this doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son upon the same level, in point of intrinsic importance, with that of His consubstantiality or true and proper divinity, yet we believe that it is much more important than many seem willing to admit, as throwing most interesting and valuable light upon many particular statements and general doctrines of Scripture, and especially as enabling us more fully to understand and realize the great doctrine which may be said to constitute the gospel of our salvation,—viz., "that God so loved the world as to give His only

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and that "God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all:" "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins."

Sec. IV.—*The Nicene Creed—Procession of the Spirit.*

There was nothing said in the original Nicene Creed about the Holy Ghost, except the simple mention of His name, because, up till that time, the Scripture doctrine concerning Him had not been made a matter of controversial discussion; but in what is commonly known as the Nicene Creed,—and which is the proper Nicene Creed as enlarged by the second general council held at Constantinople in 381,—the Holy Ghost is described as "the Lord and Lifegiver, proceeding from the Father, and with the Father and the Son to be worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets." Now, this was intended to assert the consubstantiality and co-equality of the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son, as a distinct person; and, in addition, to predicate of Him, as a distinguishing personal property, that He proceeds—*εκπορευεται* —from the Father. At a later period, the Latin or Western Church introduced into the creed the statement, that He proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son. This doctrine of the procession of the Spirit from the Son as well as from the Father, the Greek or Eastern Church refused to adopt; and the discussion of this topic was one main cause that led to the final separation of the Eastern and Western Churches, and has always continued to form a leading subject of controversy between them. The reformed churches have all adopted the doctrine of the Latin or Western Church upon this subject, and have maintained, as is done in our Confession, that the Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son. What we have at present to do with is only this, that it is a peculiar distinguishing property of the Spirit,—a fact predicated of Him and not of any other person in the Godhead,—that He proceeds—*εκπορευεται*;—*i.e.*, has the divine nature or essence communicated to Him by the other persons, or derives it from them in a mysterious and ineffable way, of which Scripture affords us no materials for saying anything,

except that, while it implies communication on the one part, and derivation on the other, it is different from, and is left in a somewhat more general and indefinite position than the "begetting and being begotten," which represents the distinguishing personal properties of the Father and the Son, and, at the same time, constitutes their mutual relation.

This is the sum and substance of all that is revealed to us in Scripture concerning the distinction in the divine nature,—concerning the three distinct persons who possess in common the one divine nature,—in so far as their true and proper divinity, or their eternal power and Godhead, are concerned; and we have now only to advert to another great truth revealed to us in Scripture concerning the second of these three persons,—viz., that He was made flesh, that He became man,—and to what is implied in and results from this.

CHAPTER X.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

The subjects which we have been considering, in connection with the Arian controversy and the Nicene Creed, come under the head of Theology, in the most restricted meaning of the word, as descriptive of that branch of divine truth which treats directly of God, or the Divine Being; and, accordingly, they are often discussed in the older systematic works under the head *De Deo Uno et Trino*. It is an important feature of the information which God in His word gives us concerning Himself, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct persons, the same in substance, and equal in power and glory; and men who know not or who deny this, cannot be said to know the true God as He has made Himself known to us. The topics involved in the controversies, to which we now proceed very briefly to advert, come under the head of what, according to the modern divisions generally adopted upon the continent, is called Christology, as distinguished from Theology in the most restricted sense of the word, and were usually discussed in the older systems under the head "De persona Mediatoris." They respect the constitution of the Saviour's person, not as He existed from eternity with the Father, but as He was when on earth working out the salvation of sinners, and as He now is in heaven at God's right hand.

So far as the Socinians are concerned, the controversy is virtually terminated by the proof of Christ's true and proper divinity. Though some ancient heretics denied Christ's humanity, and though one or two modern Arians have held that the super-angelic creature whom they regard as the Son, or *Logos*, informed or dwelt in Christ's body, and thus served as a substitute for a human soul; yet it may be said, practically and substantially, to be universally admitted that Christ was truly and really a man, possessed of a true body and a reasonable soul. It is right that we should dwell upon the abundant evidence which Scripture affords of this

position, in order that we may realize the great truth, that He was a partaker of flesh and blood,—a true and real man like ourselves. But this evidence is now scarcely ever produced for controversial objects, except when the Socinians descend to the artifice of marshalling it for the purpose of insinuating, or conveying the impression, that, because He was man, therefore He was not God. Of course, the question, whether He was God or not, is not to be disposed of in so summary a way, but by a full and impartial examination of the scriptural evidence bearing upon this point itself, conducted in the manner and upon the principles which have been already described. It is impossible to prove, *a priori*, the impossibility of a union of the divine and human natures, or of a divine person taking human nature into union with Himself,—just as impossible as it is to prove that there *cannot* be three persons subsisting in the unity of the Godhead; and if so, there is no reason why we should not receive and hold in combination both the doctrines, each of which can be conclusively established by its appropriate evidence,—viz., that Christ was from eternity God, possessed of true and proper divinity; and that when He appeared on earth He was a true and real man.

But the Scriptures not only teach us that Christ was God, and that He was man,—they further distinctly and explicitly assert the fact of His incarnation, of His being *made* flesh, of His *becoming* man,—*i.e.*, of His assuming human nature into union with the divine. The Socinians, of course, apply to those passages that assert His incarnation, the same process which they apply to those that make known His proper divinity, with the same object,—viz., to pervert them from their natural obvious meaning; and with the same result,—viz., in their failure, when tested by the rules of strict and impartial criticism; and while they attempt to accumulate additional improbabilities and difficulties, on abstract grounds, on the doctrine of His incarnation, as distinguished from the doctrine of His divinity, the fair conclusion is, that the explicit assertion in Scripture of His being made flesh, or of His becoming man, greatly confirms the evidence of His having previously existed in the possession of a higher nature. There have been some controversies among those who believed in the divinity and incarnation of Christ, as to what the assumption of the human nature by a divine person, and the consequent union in some sense of the two natures, implied or involved; and to these it may be proper

to advert, in order to complete the scriptural view of the constitution of Christ's person.

This subject was fully discussed in the fifth century, in connection with the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies; and the decisions, then pronounced by the church regarding it, have been ever since generally received by the churches of Christ. The Nestorians and Eutychians both professed to receive the decrees of the Council of Nice and Constantinople, and, of course, to believe in the incarnation of the Son of God,—*i.e.*, to believe that the second person of the Godhead, eternally begotten by the Father of His own substance, did assume human nature so as to become a man. This incarnation of the eternal Word—this assumption of human nature by the Son of God—this ενσαρκωσις, or ενανθρωπησις, as it was called by the Greek fathers—is the great fundamental truth upon the subject, clearly taught in Scripture, and clearly declared in the Nicene, or rather the Constantinopolitan, Creed; and in comparison with this great truth, the topics involved in the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies sink to the somewhat lower platform of being questions about the exact nature and precise results of the incarnation, and the mode in which it was effected. But though the doctrine, that the eternal Son of God assumed human nature so as to have thereby become a man, is the fundamental truth upon this subject, to which all others are in some sense subordinate, it does not by any means follow that the ulterior questions as to what this general truth, more precisely examined, involves or implies, are unimportant. When the question is put—and it is of course one of fundamental importance—Who or what is Christ? the direct and proper answer to it is,—That He is God and man,—*i.e.*, that having been from eternity God, He in time assumed human nature, so as thereby to become man. But when the mind dwells upon this great truth, with the view of more fully comprehending and realizing it, the questions almost immediately arise, whether, after this assumption of human nature, by one who had been from eternity possessed of the divine nature, the two natures still continued to retain each its own entireness or completeness; and whether, if so, each of the two natures did not form or constitute a distinct person, so that in Christ there should be two persons as well as two natures. And these are just the topics involved in the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies. The great doctrine of the incarna-

tion cannot be very distinctly understood, and it cannot be very clearly explained, unless these questions be kept in view, and unless the words employed in explaining it virtually contain a deliverance regarding them. Accordingly, we find that, even in works intended to convey instruction in the elementary and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, it has been felt to be necessary in describing the person of Christ, to make statements which contain a deliverance upon these controversies,—controversies which were at one time discussed with so much heat, and which, from the mode in which they were discussed in the fifth century, appeared to involve points of the most unprofitable, the most obscure, and the most perplexing description. In our Shorter Catechism, for instance, it is said, "that the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God became man, and so was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever,"—a statement which manifestly embodies the sum and substance of the decrees of the third and fourth Œcumenical Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon in the fifth century, and which cannot be explained and defended without a knowledge of those scriptural grounds applicable to the subject on which the decisions of these councils were professedly based.

Assuming that the general doctrine of the incarnation of the eternal Word, as it has been declared by the Councils of Nice and Constantinople, was generally received in the church, as it certainly was, it might have been expected that the next question which would arise, as that which most naturally and obviously presented itself to the minds of men in the progress of exposition or speculation, would be that which concerned the continued distinctness and entireness or completeness of the two natures—the divine and the human—*after* the incarnation. And this reasonable expectation seems to be contradicted by the fact that the Nestorian heresy, which divided the person, preceded the Eutychian, which confounded the natures. It should be remembered, however, that the heresy of Apollinaris, which preceded that of Nestorius, turned in substance upon the completeness of the two natures in Christ; that Nestorius, if indeed he was really a Nestorian, about which many competent judges have entertained great doubts, seems to have been led into error by going into the opposite extreme in opposing Apollinaris; and that Cyril, the great opponent of Nestorius, was charged by some with leaning

towards Apollinarianism, and what was afterwards called Eutychianism, or the heresy of the Monophysites.

Sec. I.—*The Eutychian Controversy.*

We shall first advert to the continued distinctness and completeness of the two natures in Christ, in opposition to Eutychianism; and then to the unity of the person of Christ, notwithstanding the continued distinctness and completeness of the two natures in opposition to Nestorius, or at least the Nestorians; following the order of the Catechism, which teaches that "Christ was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures," or as the Larger Catechism, with a more explicit reference to doctrinal controversies, expresses it, "in two *entire* distinct natures and one person for ever." The whole scriptural truth upon the subject is thus stated in the Confession of Faith:* "The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures,—the Godhead and the manhood,—were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man." This statement, so far as concerns the point with which we have at present more immediately to do, is given almost in the words of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which, in condemning Eutyches, gave an explanation of the whole doctrine of the incarnation, or the constitution of Christ's person, in opposition to the Nestorian as well as the Monophysite extreme. The general doctrine explicitly taught in Scripture upon this subject is, that the *Logos*, the eternal Son of God, was incarnate, or assumed human nature, or became man. Of course He could not cease to be God, to be fully possessed of the divine nature, with all divine perfections and prerogatives; and accordingly, all who admit that He was from eternity possessed of the divine nature, and that He became incarnate in time, believe that He continues to be very God, to possess the divine nature

* Chap. viii., sec. 2.

entire and unchanged. The question, therefore, respects only the entireness and completeness of the human nature after its assumption by the *Logos;* and really amounts in substance to this: Did the assumption of human nature by the eternal Son of God, leave that human nature entire and complete, so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures,—the manhood as well as the Godhead,—were still to be found joined together in Christ?

The considerations which most obviously occur as bearing upon the settlement of this question, are these: First, that we have no indication whatever in Scripture of the disappearance, absorption, or extinction of the human nature in the divine; secondly, that the fair and natural import of the scriptural statements, which declare the great fact of the incarnation, leads to the conclusion that the human nature, though assumed into union with the divine, continued to exist in its proper character as human nature, retaining all its essential properties; and, thirdly, especially and above all,—for this is the direct and conclusive proof,—that Christ is uniformly represented to us in Scripture, during His abode upon earth, and of course after the incarnation, even from His birth, as being truly, properly, and in all respects, a man, or a partaker of human nature, with all its necessary constituent elements and essential properties. It is on this position mainly that the question hinges,—it is by this chiefly that it is to be decided. Christ had been from eternity God over all; He assumed human nature into union with the divine. The divine nature of course continued unchanged, because it is unchangeable. Did the human nature also continue unchanged, distinct from the divine, though inseparably united with it? Christ is uniformly represented to us in Scripture as being *prima facie* a man—a full partaker of human nature in all its completeness. If it be asserted that He had not human nature in its entireness and perfection, or that anything essential to human nature was wanting in Him, the *onus probandi* must lie upon those who make this assertion; for the obvious import of the general declaration of the incarnation, and the general bearing of the representation given us of Christ during His abode upon earth, plainly lead to an opposite conclusion. There is no evidence whatever in Scripture that Christ wanted anything whatever to make Him an entire and perfect man, or possessor of human nature in all its completeness; and, on the contrary, there is direct and positive proof that he had every essential property of humanity.

The distinctive constituent elements of a man, of a human being, of one who is possessed of perfect human nature, are a body and a soul united. Christ took to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, and He retained, and still retains them in all their completeness, and with all their essential qualities. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, "of her substance," as is said in the Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism; these words, "of her substance," being intended as a negation of an old heresy, revived by some Anabaptists after the Reformation, to the effect that He was conceived *in* Mary, but not *of* her; and that He, as it were, passed through her body without deriving anything from her substance; and being intended to assert, in opposition to this notion, that she contributed to the formation of Christ's human nature, just what mothers ordinarily contribute to the formation of their children. Having thus taken a true body, formed of the substance of the Virgin, He continued ever after to retain it, as is manifest in the whole history of His life, of His death, and of the period succeeding His resurrection; and He has it still at the right hand of God. He took also a reasonable soul, possessed of all the ordinary faculties and capacities of the souls of other men, including a power of volition, which is asserted in opposition to the error of the Monothelites. We see this clearly manifested in the whole of His history, both before and after His death and resurrection; and the proofs of it might very easily be drawn out in detail in a survey of the whole record which God has given us concerning His Son. The denial of perfect and entire manhood, as well as Godhead, in Christ, rests upon no better foundation than a vague and confused notion, that the divine must, somehow or other, have absorbed or extinguished and swallowed up the human nature; so that the human could not, after its union to the divine, continue to exist in its entireness, and in the possession of all its own essential properties. But this is a mere imagination or conjecture, which has no solid foundation to rest upon. We must not imagine or conjecture anything upon such a subject, but seek simply to ascertain what the word of God makes known to us. That word plainly represents Christ to us as being and continuing a true and perfect man, after the human nature had been assumed into union by the divine; and thus shows that our plain and imperative duty is just to believe on God's testimony, that the divine nature did

not absorb or extinguish the human, but left it, notwithstanding the union between them, distinct, in all its entireness and completeness, so that Christ really was very man as well as very God, and had manhood as well as Godhead, whole and entire.

The Son of God assumed human nature into union with the divine. The human nature is, of course, liable to change or alteration, while the divine is not; and, therefore, the question naturally enough occurs, What became of this human nature when it was taken into union with the divine; what position did it thereafter occupy? It was to contradict or exclude all supposeable modes of explaining its position and relation to the divine nature, except that to which the whole tenor of God's words shuts us up,—viz., that it still, in the union, retained its own entire completeness and perfection—that the Council of Chalcedon declared that they were united together,—*ἄτρεπτως και ἀσύγχυτως*; and that it is declared in our own Confession, that they "were joined together without conversion, composition, or confusion." It is not needful to suppose that these three words in our Confession are intended to convey three distinct or materially different ideas; or indeed anything more in substance than the *ἄτρεπτως και ἀσύγχυτως* introduced by the fathers of Chalcedon against Eutyches, and ever since generally adopted by the orthodox churches. Composition and confusion are here used as critically synonymous—the one being merely exegetical of the other, and the two together just expressing most fully the sense of *ἀσύγχυτως*, for which indeed the word communication, as well as composition or confusion, has been sometimes employed. If the human nature did *not* continue in Christ perfect and entire, so that He still was very man as well as very God, there are just two ways, in one or other of which it must, when assumed by the divine nature, have been disposed of. It may be conceived to have been changed or converted into the divine nature, so as to have been wholly absorbed by it, and thereby to have ceased to have any proper existence of its own; this is denied to have taken place, when it is said that the two natures were united,—*ἄτρεπτως*,—without conversion, without the one being changed into the other. Or else the two in their union may have been confused or mixed up together, so as that a third nature was formed out of the composition or commixture of the two which was neither the one nor the other, but partook partly of the properties of both; this is denied to have taken

place, when it is asserted that they were joined together,—ἀσύγχυτως,—without composition or confusion. And the grounds of these negations are twofold: First, the intrinsic and inherent absurdity and impossibility of the things themselves,—*i.e.*, of the human nature being changed into the divine; unless, indeed, this be supposed to be the same as the annihilation of the human nature, which is possible, but which is not contended for, or being commingled with it, so as to change or modify *its* character.* And, secondly, their inconsistency with the scriptural representation of the continued entireness and complete perfection of the human nature in its distinctive characteristics, and with all its essential properties, in Christ after its assumption into union with the divine. There would have been no occasion whatever for making such assertions, or for employing such phrases as these, had not the Eutychians† maintained that there was but one nature in Christ,—that He was indeed of two natures, as they expressed it, *i.e.*, that the divine and human natures both went, or contributed in some way, to the formation or constitution of His person;—but that He was not *in*, as well as *of*, two natures, inasmuch as from the time when the union of the two was formed, one or other, or both, had been in some way changed, so that they were not both, if either, found in Him entire and perfect. If the eternal Son of God assumed human nature, and if yet Christ, from the time when the assumption took place, had but one nature, as they held, it followed necessarily, that the union or assumption must have taken place in such a way, that either the one was changed into the other, or that the two must have been commingled together, so as that one compound was formed out of them. Hence the necessity and consequent propriety, with a view to the explicit contradiction and exclusion of the whole error upon this subject, in its root and branches, of asserting that the divine and human natures were, and continued to be, in Christ distinct, entire, and perfect, being united together,—ἄτρεπτως και ἀσύγχυτως,—"without conversion," and without "composition or confusion."

Sec. II.—*The Nestorian Controversy.*

Though Christ had two distinct natures, entire and perfect, He had but one person, as the ancient church decided against

* Bishop Barrow on the Creed. † Campbell's Lectures, Lect. xiv., p. 256.

Nestorius, and as has been since generally held by orthodox churches. This position is necessary, in order to our forming right views of the person of the Mediator; and the meaning of this position, though it does not perhaps admit of any very clear, formal definition, is just practically and in substance this, that from the time when the union of the divine and human natures took place, all that was said, done, or suffered, was said, done, and suffered by one and the same Being, without any distinction of persons subsisting in that one Being, as there does in the unity of the Godhead,—there being but one speaker in regard to all the words which Christ uttered, one agent in regard to all the actions which He performed, one sufferer in regard to all the afflictions which He endured. There is no appearance in Scripture of anything like a distinction of persons in Christ, of a divine person saying or doing some things ascribed to Him, and of a human person saying or doing other things, also ascribed to Him. On the contrary, He is uniformly represented as being in every sense one; and if we just submit our understandings fairly and implicitly to the influence of the views given us concerning Christ in the word of God, we can no more doubt that He was one person, though He possessed two natures united together, and each perfect and entire, than we can doubt that any one of our fellow-men is one person, though he has a body and a soul united together,—and though some things that may be predicated of Him generally and without distinction, are true only of His soul, and other things only of His body. The ground on which the person of Christ has been divided, and on which it has been maintained that He had two persons as well as two natures, is not in the least a scriptural, but merely a metaphysical one. The doctrine ascribed to Nestorius, and certainly taught by some of his followers, that Christ had two persons, is represented as a natural or necessary consequence of His having two natures. It is not necessary to enter into any metaphysical discussion upon such a point. It is enough that the word of God uniformly represents Him as one person, though having two distinct natures united together; and to remember that it was the person of the Son, the eternal Word, who, retaining His own proper personality, assumed, not a human person, but human nature, into union with the divine.

These great scriptural truths concerning the person of Christ, the Mediator between God and man, when combined together,

form what is usually called by divines the doctrine of the hypostatical union, or the union of the divine and human natures in the one hypostasis, or person of Christ. There are several distinct truths, each based upon clear and abundant scriptural authority, that, when combined, go to form this great doctrine,—which declares or unfolds the person of Christ, the Redeemer of God's elect. The particular truths or doctrines which exhibit or unfold the constitution of Christ's person, are these: first, that He was God, possessed of the divine nature and perfections, and God's Son, even with reference to His divine nature, as standing from eternity in a certain special relation to the first person of the Godhead, analagous in some respects, though of course not in all, to the relation subsisting between a son and a father among men; secondly, that He was a man possessed of human nature, with all its essential properties and common infirmities, yet without sin,—an actual partaker of flesh and blood, having a true body and a reasonable soul, as we have; thirdly, that, though He possessed at once the divine and human natures, He was but one person, as distinguished from two or more persons. Now, if these different doctrines are each based upon scriptural authority, then, when combined together, they just form the one great doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, which is thus proved to be taught in the word of God; while it manifestly unfolds to us all that we could desire to know concerning the person of Him who is set before us in Scripture as the only Saviour of sinners. The only thing materially necessary to complete the scriptural account of the person of the Redeemer, is, that this union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, having been once formed, is never again to be dissolved. It existed while He tabernacled on earth,—it exists now while He sits at the right hand of God,—it will continue when He comes again to judge the world,—and it will last for ever.

There is one other position concerning this matter laid down in the Confession as taught in Scripture, to which, before finally quitting this subject, I may briefly advert.* It is this: "Christ, in the work of mediation, acteth according to both natures; by each nature doing that which is proper to itself: yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is some-

* Chap. viii., sec. 7.

times in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature." * The union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, with a view to the salvation of sinners, was effected just because there were some things necessary for the salvation of men which could be accomplished only by God, and others which could be done or endured only by man. Man alone could suffer and die, and God alone could satisfy the divine justice and magnify the divine law. Christ, accordingly, being God and man in one person, did by each nature that which was proper to itself.

The second part of the statement just quoted from the Confession is a mere assertion of a fact in regard to a certain scriptural usage of language, and its accuracy is proved by such texts as this—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us." Dying is, of course, proper to the human nature; yet it is here attributed to God—the person denominated by the divine nature; and the ground or reason of the attribution is, that that person who laid down His life, and did so as man, was also God. The Confession, in making this statement, merely notices a fact, or points out an actual scriptural usage of language; but is not to be understood as laying down any general principle by which we may be guided in our use of language. We ought to make no such attributions of what is proper to one nature to the person denominated by the other, except only when the Scripture has gone before us, and sanctioned it. Some persons, upon the ground that instances of this usage of language occur in Scripture, have thought themselves warranted to indulge in minute and elaborate attributions of what was proper to the *one* nature, to the person denominated by the *other*, and thus to form an elaborate series of startling and *prima facie* contradictory or irreconcilable positions,—declaring of Christ's human nature, or at least of Christ as man, what was true only of the divine, or of Christ as God, and *vice versa*,—a practice which I cannot but regard as inconsistent with the awe and reverence with which the great mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh—ought ever to be contemplated. The position in the Confession,—a mere statement of a fact in regard to an occasional scriptural usage of

* This is called by divines the κοινωνία ἰδίωματων, or communicatio proprietatum.

language,—must be carefully distinguished from a doctrine which *sounds* very like it, and which has been strenuously maintained by Lutheran divines, as the ground of *their* tenet concerning the ubiquity or omnipresence of Christ's body, as it is called, which they are accustomed to adduce in defence of their view of the real presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist. The Lutheran doctrine is, that what is proper to one nature may be attributed, not, as our Confession says, to the *person* denominated by the other nature, or described by a name taken from the other nature, *but to the other nature itself;* and more particularly, that the ubiquity or omnipresence of Christ's divine nature may be attributed, because it really belongs, or has been communicated, to His human nature; nay, to His body or flesh. It is quite unnecessary to expose this absurd and monstrous doctrine; it is enough to point out that, though resembling in sound the statement contained in the Confession, it is essentially different in its nature and import, and in the authority on which it rests.

The errors involved in the Eutychian and Nestorian controversies are not now, and, indeed, have scarcely ever been since they were first broached, subjects of serious practical discussion, though there are still some sects of Christians in the East who are understood to hold them. The chief use *now* to be made of an examination of these controversies, — of the points which they involved, and of the grounds on which they were decided,—is not so much to guard us against errors which may be pressed upon us, and into which we may be tempted to fall, but rather to aid us in forming clear and definite conceptions of the truths regarding the person of Christ, which all profess to believe; in securing precision and accuracy of language in explaining them, and especially to assist us in realizing them; in habitually regarding as great and actual realities the leading features of the constitution of Christ's person, which the word of God unfolds to us. Scarcely any man in the Western Church has, ever since the fifth or sixth century, deliberately and intentionally taught Eutychian or Nestorian error, though charges of this sort have occasionally been brought against individuals—not because they had deliberately embraced these errors, and seriously meant to defend them, but because, from ignorance or inadvertence, they had been led to use language which had something of an Eutychian or Nestorian complexion. It would be no very difficult thing to produce

specimens of this, or of something like it, from works on popular theology; and I am not sure that I have not heard from the pulpit phrases which a more intelligent acquaintance with the discussions that have taken place in regard to the constitution of Christ's person, would have led men to avoid,—expressions which, if strictly interpreted and followed out, would have tended *either* towards dividing the one person, or confounding the two natures. It is, of course, the duty of all to see that they are able to unfold the scriptural views of the person of the Redeemer with clearness, precision, and accuracy. There is reason to fear that professing Christians in general, and even ministers of the gospel, are too apt to rest satisfied with very vague and indefinite conceptions of the person of Christ, and to contemplate Him too much merely in general as a glorious and exalted being, who came down from heaven to save sinners, without distinctly regarding Him as being at once very God and very man,—a real possessor of the divine nature, and at the same time as truly and fully a real partaker of flesh and blood like ourselves. This is the view given us in Scripture of the person of our Redeemer; and it is only when this view of His person, in all its completeness, is understood and realized, that we are duly honouring the Son, and that we are at all fitted to cherish and express the feelings and to discharge the duties of which He is the appropriate object,—to love Him with all our hearts, at once as our Creator and our elder Brother,—to rest in Him alone for salvation,—to yield ourselves unto Him as alive from the dead,—and to rely with implicit confidence on His ability and willingness to make all things work together for our welfare, and to admit us at length into His own presence and glory.*

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* *Vide* Owen on the Person of Christ; Dods on the Incarnation.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY.

THE Pelagian controversy respects chiefly topics which are usually classed by continental writers under the head of *Anthropology*, or the doctrine of what man is, and of how he is influenced in those matters which concern his salvation. They stand connected with the views which Scripture unfolds to us of the actual state and condition of human nature, and, of course, of each man who possesses it, and of the kind and causes of those changes, if such there be, which are necessary to prepare men for the enjoyment of heaven. The discussion of these topics, indeed, runs up into the investigation of the divine sovereignty and fore-ordination; but still the basis and starting-point may be said to lie in the questions, What is man? his character and capacities? and what the nature and the source of those changes which must be produced upon him in order to prepare him for the enjoyment of God's presence? The Pelagian controversy thus includes all those most important and difficult topics which are usually discussed in works on systematic theology, under the heads, *De peccato*, *De gratia*, *De vocatione*, and *De prædestinatione*. No subjects can surpass in intrinsic importance those which treat directly of God and Christ; but those we have now to advert to are not inferior in importance, being just as intimately connected with the salvation of men's souls, and therefore as truly necessary to be known, and known correctly, and as fundamental in their character. The history of the church seems to indicate that somehow the prosperity of vital personal religion is more closely connected with correct views of the points involved in the Pelagian controversy, than even with correct views upon the subject of the Trinity and of the person of Christ. There never, indeed, has been much appearance of true personal religion where the divinity of the Son of God has been denied; but there has been often a profession

of sound doctrine upon this subject, long maintained, where there has been little real religion. Whereas, not only has there never been much real religion where there was not a profession of substantially sound doctrine in regard to the points involved in the Pelagian controversy, but also—and this is the point of contrast—the decay of true religion has always been accompanied by a large measure of error in doctrine upon these subjects; the action and reaction of the two upon each other being speedy and manifest. The apostate Church of Rome has preserved throughout an orthodox profession on the subject of the Trinity; but though precluded by her avowed principles from professing Pelagian doctrines, which have been frequently anathematized by popes and councils, she has always, in her practical teaching, exhibited a large amount of Pelagian error, and may be said to have become formally liable to the charge of teaching Pelagianism, in consequence of the general adoption by the church of the famous Bull Unigenitus, against the Jansenists, published in the early part of last century.

There is one consideration which makes the Pelagian controversy somewhat more intricate and perplexing than the Trinitarian; and that is, that there is room for a greater diversity of sentiment, and a greater indefiniteness or latitude of statement, even among those who may, perhaps, be regarded as agreeing in the main substance of the doctrine, in the one case than in the other. Few persons who have been classed under the general designation of Pelagians—except Pelagius himself, and his immediate followers, Cœlestius, and Julian, and modern Socinians and Rationalists—have denied altogether that man's nature suffered some moral taint or corruption from the fall, or that the gracious agency of God is in some way necessary in preparing men for heaven. When men go so far as to deny these things, the grounds of controversy are abundantly clear and definite; but there have been many who, without going nearly so far, and without therefore having opened up nearly so clear and definite a field for controversial discussion, have yet been charged, and justly, with greatly underrating the effects of the fall upon man's moral nature; and with superseding, to some extent at least, the agency of the Spirit in his conversion and sanctification. Pelagianism, in its original historical sense, is thus a pretty definite heresy, striking at the root of almost all that is most peculiar and dis-

tinctive in the system of revealed truth; but what has been called semi-Pelagianism—which may be regarded as describing, in general, views that make some approach to Pelagianism, but do not go quite so far—is of a much more vague and indefinite character. Pelagianism, and other words of a similar description, are often used in theological literature with a considerable measure of vagueness,—not to describe the precise sentiments of him from whom the name is derived, but rather as a convenient, though of course somewhat loose, mode of indicating a general class of opinions, of which there may be no one very definite standard, and which may not have been fully developed by the original broacher of the doctrines, who has given name to the system, but only by those who have afterwards followed in the same general track. There has been, perhaps, more indefiniteness in the use of the word Pelagianism than in that of almost any other word of a similar kind; for this, among other reasons, that there has never been any distinct and separate community of professing Christians to which this designation has been generally attached as their ordinary distinctive appellation.

The Socinians, indeed, have fully adopted the views of the original Pelagians in regard to the character and capacities of man's moral nature, and the agency of divine grace; but these are not the features of Socinianism which have attracted the largest measure of public attention. Arminians have been commonly charged with holding Pelagian errors; and no doubt all Arminians hold some principles which were maintained by Pelagius and his followers, and opposed by Augustine and the church in general in his day; but then there have been some of the better class of Arminians,—especially Arminius and the Wesleyan Methodists,—who, however inconsistently, fully adopt Augustine's views upon what are usually regarded as the main distinctive features of the Pelagian system,—viz., the entire depravity of human nature, and the absolute necessity of the special gracious agency of God in the whole process of the conversion and sanctification of sinners,—and are thus much more orthodox upon these points than even the semi-Pelagians were. In ordinary usage, Pelagianism is commonly employed as a general designation of defective and erroneous views in regard to the extent and consequences of human depravity, and of the necessity of special divine agency in conversion and sanctification; and it is obvious that there is room for

considerable latitude in the extent to which the deviation from sound scriptural doctrine upon this point may be carried.

There are strong and powerful tendencies of various kinds that lead men to underrate the injurious effects of the fall upon their moral nature, and the consequent necessity of divine grace for their renovation; and on this account, Pelagian views, more or less fully developed, have prevailed very extensively in almost every age of the church. Generally they have assumed somewhat of a philosophic dress, and have prevailed most among those who have thought themselves entitled to the character of rational Christians, and professed to be very zealous for the interests of morality and virtue. Sometimes, however, as we see in the Morisonianism of our own day, they have assumed a more apparently scriptural and sanctimonious garb, and have been accompanied with great professions of an eager desire for the conversion of sinners, and an anxious wish to remove every obstruction to men's coming to Christ, and laying hold of the offered blessings of the gospel. In this latter class of cases, there has usually been mixed up with the Pelagian error a larger amount of scriptural truth than has been maintained by the more rational and philosophical Pelagians,—so much of scriptural truth, indeed, as that God may have, to some extent, blessed the labours of these persons for the conversion of souls,—not of course because of the error they hold, but in spite of it, and because of the truth they hold along with it. But, in so far as this particular point is concerned, they, just as much as the other class, obscure the divine sovereignty in the salvation of sinners, and do what they can to rob God of the glory which He has declared that He will not give to another.

Sec. I.—*Historical Statement.*

In formerly directing attention to the testimony of the primitive church,—*i.e.*, the church of the three first centuries,—upon the subject of the doctrines of grace, we had occasion to show that it was of a somewhat dubious and uncertain kind; that these topics had not during that period been, at least in all their length and breadth, subjects of controversial discussion; and that in consequence, as is usually the case, there had been considerable vagueness and inaccuracy in the language sometimes employed regarding them. The discussions in which the early fathers

were engaged had a tendency to lead them rather to magnify the power of man's free-will, since fatalism, or something like it, deeply pervaded the Oriental and Gnostic systems; and it is chiefly on what some of them have said in magnifying man's free-will, in opposition to fatalism, that those who have maintained that Pelagian views prevailed in the primitive church have taken their stand. Statements, however, upon this point do not afford the best or most certain test of men's views upon the subject of the doctrines of grace in general. Augustine certainly did not deny man's free-will altogether, and in every sense of the word; and the most zealous defenders of the doctrines of grace and of Calvinistic principles have admitted that there is a free-will or free-agency, in some sense, which man has, and which is necessary to his being responsible for his transgressions of God's law. It is laid down in our own Confession, that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil;" and it would not be easy to prove, in regard to the generality of the fathers of the first three centuries, that they believed, or really intended to declare, more in regard to the free-will of man, even when they were contending against fatalism, than may be fairly regarded as involved in this position, especially as they have given us no reason to believe that they ever deliberately considered the distinctions which are of fundamental importance in regard to this whole question,—viz., between man's liberty of will before and after the fall, and between his free-agency in regard to things spiritual, and things merely civil and moral. It is very certain that they were not in general Pelagians, since they almost all held in some sense the doctrine of original sin,—*i.e.*, believed that man's moral nature was to some extent corrupted in consequence of the fall, and that all that was truly good in man was to be ascribed to God's special agency, and not to the exercise of his own powers and capacities. At the same time, it is plain that they had no very distinct conception of what these truths involved, especially in their connection with each other and the other departments of Christian doctrine, and did not always speak regarding them in a very definite or consistent way.

There does not appear to have been any very material change in the general strain of the teaching of the church upon this subject in the fourth century, from what it had been during the

three preceding centuries. Chrysostom's works contain many statements to which the Pelagians, or at least the semi-Pelagians, appealed, and not without reason, in support of these doctrines; while Augustine, in defending the doctrines of grace, appealed sometimes to Ambrose, who had been the chief instrument in the hand of God of leading him to the knowledge of the truth, though there is good reason to doubt whether Ambrose's teaching upon these subjects was perfectly uniform and consistent.* It was in the early part of the fifth century that the doctrines of grace were, for the first time, subjected to a full investigation, error being then more openly and explicitly taught, and truth being more satisfactorily defended and illustrated, developed and systematized, than ever before. It is this which stamps so special an importance upon the Pelagian controversy. It is this which sheds so peculiar a glory around the name of Augustine,—a glory which attaches in the same degree to no man whom Christ gave to His church, from the age of the apostles till the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

We see in Augustine what has not unfrequently been noticed in men whom God has made signal blessings to His church, that even before his conversion he was subjected to a course of discipline and training that was not without its use, in preparing him for the work to which he was afterwards to be called: I refer especially to his having been for a good many years involved in the heresy of Manichæism,—a fact which I have no doubt was overruled by God for preserving him from the danger to which men who are called upon to engage in arduous controversy upon difficult and perplexed subjects are so very liable,—that, viz., of leaning to an extreme opposite to that against which they may feel it to be their duty at the time to contend. Manichæism may be regarded as, in some respects, an opposite extreme to Pelagianism, as the former implied a sort of fatalism, and the latter exalted unwarrantably the natural powers of man. It has, indeed, been alleged by Pelagians, both in ancient and in modern times, that Augustinianism, or Calvinism,—for they are in substance the same,—is tainted by some infusion of Manichæan error; and it has been asserted, that this is to be traced to Augustine retaining some leaven of his old Manichæan principles: but the general experience of mankind shows that this theory is most improbable,

* Neander's General Church History, vol. iv., p. 299.

and proves that it is much more likely that a man who had, deliberately and from full conviction, renounced a system of error, pervaded throughout by one uniform and peculiar character, should, in place of retaining and cherishing any of its distinctive principles, be rather apt to run into the opposite extreme. Augustine, assuredly, did not run into the opposite extreme to Manichæism—else he would not have made such strenuous opposition to Pelagianism; but neither, in opposing Pelagianism, was he tempted to go to the opposite extreme of Manichæism, as he might probably,—according to the tendencies which controversialists too often manifest,—have been led to do, had he not previously sounded the depths and subtleties of Manichæism, and been led decidedly and deliberately to reject it. There would probably have been some better ground for the charge of Manichæism, which has often, without foundation, been adduced against Augustine, had he not both embraced and renounced this heresy before he was called upon to engage in the Pelagian controversy; but as matters stand, it can be fully established that, in opposing the Pelagian heresy, he has avoided all tendency to run into the Manichæan extreme, and been enabled to keep, with wonderful accuracy, in regard to all the essential features of the controversy, the golden mean of scriptural truth.

The founders of Pelagianism—men who have had few followers in the extent to which they carried their views, except the Socinians and Rationalists of modern times—were Pelagius, Cœlestius, and Julian. The two former were monks, but, as was usually the case with monks at this period, they were laymen and not clergymen. Julian was Bishop of Eclanum, a small village in Italy, near Capua; for even in the fifth century many villages still had bishops. Pelagius was a native of Britain; and Cœlestius, too, is supposed to have been a countryman of our own, though the evidence in regard to him is not very conclusive. Jerome, who was always remarkable for the virulence with which he assailed his opponents, never being able to see any good quality in them, speaks with the utmost contempt of Pelagius and Cœlestius; but Augustine, who was, after his conversion, as highly exalted above the generality of the fathers of his age in the personal excellence of his character, as he was in ability and knowledge of divine truth, speaks very respectfully both of their talent and of the general character which they had sustained. They seem to

have broached their errors at Rome about the year 411, and to have afterwards visited Africa and the East. They met with no countenance in Africa, where Augustine's influence was very powerful, and their doctrines were condemned in several African councils, which were held most of them at Carthage. Pelagius met with more favour in the East, chiefly in consequence of the prevalence of Origen's views, which were akin in some respects to his own; and at a council held to examine his doctrines at Diospolis, or Lydda, in Palestine, he was acquitted of the charge of heresy, though there is reason to believe that this result was brought about chiefly by his concealing and explaining away his opinions, and by his renouncing and anathematizing some statements which had been made by Cœlestius, and in which there is good ground to believe that Pelagius himself really concurred, though there was not at that time any evidence to bring them home to him. Innocent, Bishop of Rome, condemned the new doctrines; but Cœlestius afterwards, by skill and cunning in explaining and glossing over his statements, managed to impose upon the ignorance and simplicity of his successor Zosimus, who publicly pronounced him orthodox,—a judgment, however, which he was afterwards induced to retract by the expostulations of Augustine and the African bishops. These different transactions have occasioned much difficulty to the defenders of Papal infallibility, who usually allege in cases of this sort,—as, for example, in that of Pope Liberius, who subscribed an Arian creed, and Pope Honorius, who advocated Monothelitism, and was anathematized in consequence as a heretic by the sixth œcumenical council,—that they never really believed the heresies which they taught, but only professed them, either from some misapprehension, or through the force of temptation, in order to avoid persecution, which, it seems, are not inconsistent with their being fully qualified to be infallible guides and rulers of the church. The Pelagian controversy was conducted chiefly in Africa and the West, and did not attract much attention in the East, where the bishops generally were engaged in discussing the errors broached by Apollinaris, Nestorius, and Eutyches.* The third general council, held at Ephesus in 431, which condemned Nestorius, condemned also

* Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, though writing the history of the period, do not even mention it.

Pelagius, Cœlestius, and Julian; and thus the church in general at this time may be said to have condemned Pelagianism, and to have sanctioned the views of Augustine, though it is deserving of remark, that, in the proceedings of the Council of Ephesus, there is merely a general condemnation of the doctrines taught by Pelagius, Cœlestius, and Julian, without any formal declaration of the orthodox doctrine upon the subject in opposition to their errors, or even a statement of what the specific errors were which they had taught. Augustine laboured for about twenty years, with all the powers of his mind, and with unwearied zeal and assiduity, in opposition to the errors of Pelagius; writing many books upon the subject, most of which have come down to us, and exerting his influence in every other way to prevent the spread of heresy. The Lord was pleased to call him to his rest in the year 430, while he was engaged in writing a book against Julian, which has come down to us in an imperfect state, as he left it, and without affording him the satisfaction of witnessing the triumph of sound doctrine, and the condemnation of its opponents in the General Council of Ephesus.

Pelagius, and his immediate followers, Cœlestius and Julian, taught openly and explicitly that man's moral character had received no injury from the fall, and that men were born now with as much ability to do the will of God, and to discharge all the obligations incumbent upon them, as Adam; and, in consequence, they denied the necessity of divine grace, or of any special divine agency or influence upon men, unless it might be for the purpose of enabling them to do more easily that which, however, they were able to do, though less easily, without it, and which, in their estimation, was nothing less than attaining to perfection in holiness in this life. These doctrines are so palpably inconsistent, not only with many particular statements, but with the whole scope and substance of Scripture, that they did not gain much support in the church; and after the decision of the Council of Ephesus, they seem to have almost wholly disappeared.

Pelagius and his immediate followers do not seem to have called in question the doctrine of the Trinity, or any of the scriptural doctrines more immediately connected with it; and yet it is very manifest that modern Socinians and Rationalists are the only consistent Pelagians. When men reject what Pelagius rejected, they are bound in consistency to reject *everything* that is peculiar and

distinctive in the Christian system as a remedial scheme. Upon Pelagian principles, there is no occasion for, and really no meaning in, a Saviour, an atonement, a Holy Spirit. No evil has befallen our race, and there is no occasion for a remedy, especially for such a remedy as the Bible has been generally regarded as unfolding. Augustine, through God's blessing, put down this unscriptural, inconsistent, and cowardly scheme of heresy; and it was not revived until after the Reformation, when it appeared in the bolder and more consistent form of Socinianism. There are, however, as we have said, powerful tendencies in human nature, leading men to over-estimate their own moral powers and capacities, and to think lightly of the necessity and importance of divine grace,—of God's special agency; and while, on the one hand, Pelagius' views met with little countenance, Augustine's, on the other, met with a good deal of opposition. An intermediate scheme was devised, which has passed under the name of semi-Pelagianism, and which, whether bearing that name or not, has almost always prevailed to a considerable extent in the professedly Christian church, especially when true piety was in a feeble or declining condition; and has comprehended men of very different characters, and been held in conjunction with other doctrines, approaching more or less nearly to the scriptural standard. Semi-Pelagianism, from its very nature, bears a character of great indefiniteness. It admits original sin in some sense; *i.e.*, it admits that man's moral nature is more or less corrupted in consequence of the fall, and that special divine assistance was more or less necessary, in order to the attainment of those things which accompany salvation. These intermediate and indefinite views, resembling very much the doctrines which have been held generally by Arminians in modern times, were broached during Augustine's lifetime, and thus afforded him an opportunity of directing against *them* the same great definite scriptural doctrines which he had wielded with so much ability and success against Pelagianism. The contest was carried on after his death, on the side of truth, by Prosper and Fulgentius; but though semi-Pelagianism was never formally approved of by the church, and was very explicitly and formally condemned by a Provincial Council of France, the second Council of Orange, Concilium Arausicanum, in 529, it prevailed practically to a considerable extent till the period of the Reformation.

Augustine has had the peculiar honour assigned to him, by the great Head of the church, of having been the first to develop, in a systematic order, and in their right connection with each other, the great doctrines taught in the word of God concerning man's lost and ruined condition by nature; the gracious agency of God in the conversion and sanctification of sinners; and the true cause or source of all the effects thus produced, wherever they are produced, in His own sovereign good pleasure and eternal purpose,—having mercy on whom He would have mercy, and having compassion on whom He would have compassion; and he was thus enabled to render most important services to the cause of truth and righteousness in all succeeding generations. There is indeed much reason to believe that no inconsiderable portion of the piety that existed in the church from the time when he flourished till the Reformation,—a period of above one thousand years,—was instrumentally connected, more or less directly, with his influence and writings. We may apply the same statement to almost everything like piety that has ever been found in connection with the Church of Rome, including what is certainly to the eye of a Christian by far the brightest spot in the history of that apostate communion,—viz., the Port-Royalists, and the other Jansenists of France in the seventeenth century.

Augustine, indeed, eminently as he was furnished by the great Head of the church both with gifts and graces for defending and promoting divine truth, is not by any means an infallible judge, to whom we can securely trust. God has never given to any uninspired man or body of men, to rise thoroughly and in all respects above the reach of the circumstances in which they have been placed, and the influences to which they have been subjected; and Augustine was certainly involved to a considerable extent in some of the corrupt and erroneous views and practices which in his time were already prevailing widely in the church. There are, it must be admitted, some of the corruptions of Popery, the germs of which at least, though not fully developed, are to be found in his writings. But the great defect with which he is chargeable is, that he seems to have had no very clear or accurate views of the great doctrine of justification by faith. He did not accurately understand the meaning of justification as a forensic or judicial term, as distinguished from sanctification; and he seems to have to some extent confounded them together, as the Church

of Rome still does. It could not be, indeed, that a man of Augustine's undoubted and eminent piety, and with so deep a sense as he had of human depravity and of God's sovereignty in determining man's character and condition, could have been resting upon any works or merits of his own for salvation, and therefore he must practically and in heart have been resting upon Christ alone; and this general statement must have been true of many others besides him in the early and middle ages, who had obscure or erroneous views upon this subject. But he had certainly not attained to any such knowledge of God's word in regard to this matter, as would have enabled him to give a very accurate or consistent exposition of the reason or ground of his hope. I formerly had occasion to explain, that at a very early period in the history of the church, the scriptural doctrine of justification became obscured and lost sight of, and was never again revived in all its fulness and purity until the Lord raised up Luther as His instrument in effecting that important result. The early fathers soon began to talk in an unscriptural and mystical way about the objects and effects of the sacraments; and at length they came to talk of baptism as if it not only signified and represented, but actually conferred, and conferred invariably, both the forgiveness of sins and the renovation of men's moral natures. Augustine knew too much of the word of God, and of the scheme of divine truth, to go thoroughly into such views as these; but he certainly had such notions of the nature and effects of baptism, and of its connection with the forgiveness of sins, as to lead him to some extent to overlook and throw into the background, if not to pervert, the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone. The subject of baptism entered largely into his controversy with the Pelagians,—he adducing the baptism of infants for the remission of sins as a proof of original sin, and they regarding it, like the modern Socinians, merely as the appointed rite or ceremony of outward admission into the communion of the visible church; and though he was right in the main in the use and application he made of baptism in opposition to the Pelagian denial of original sin, yet he showed very strikingly how much he was perverted by erroneous and exaggerated views of the nature, objects, and importance of external ordinances, by broadly and unequivocally laying down the doctrine that all infants dying unbaptized are consigned to everlasting misery,—a doctrine which is

still generally taught in the Church of Rome. The Pelagian controversy, as conducted in Augustine's time, embraced a great variety of topics,—taking in, indeed, more or less fully nearly all the leading doctrines of Christianity, except the Trinity and the atonement; and these were not comprehended, just because the original Pelagians had not the boldness and consistency of modern Socinians in following out or developing their own principles. Forbes, in his Instructiones Historico-Theologicæ, has enumerated twenty-six topics, which were controverted between Augustine and his opponents; but they are all reducible, as to their main features, to a few general heads,—such as Original Sin, and Free-will; Grace, or Divine Agency in the conversion and sanctification of nners; Predestination, and the Perseverance of Saints,—and under these heads we propose very briefly to advert to them.

Let me again remark, before proceeding to advert to these topics, that the permanent value of the labours and writings of Augustine in the Pelagian controversy, lies not mainly or chiefly in his having exposed, and through God's blessing put down, Pelagianism in the gross form in which it was at first propounded, and in which it is now held by Socinians and Rationalists, but in his having brought out the clear and definite doctrines of God's word, so as at one and the same time to refute and exclude not only Pelagianism, but also what has been designated semi-Pelagianism; and thus to furnish an antidote to all the numerous atttempts which have since been made to exalt unduly the power of man in spiritual things, without wholly superseding the necessity of divine grace, and in this way to share the glory of the salvation of sinners between the saved and the Saviour. This consideration obviously suggests, that in the brief and imperfect notice which alone we can give of this important controversy, we must confine ourselves chiefly to the statement of those great scriptural truths which Augustine so fully unfolded and so ably defended, and which strike at the root of all the errors which have been held upon these subjects, either in ancient or in modern times, and whether in a grosser or in a more mitigated form.

Sec. II.—*Depravity—Original Sin.*

That branch of Christian doctrine, which is now frequently called *Anthropology*, proposes to answer the question, What is

man in his moral and spiritual character and capacities; in his relations to God and to eternity? So far as the question respects merely the actual features and constituent elements of man's moral nature, there is no incompetency or impropriety in men looking into their own hearts, and surveying their own lives, in order to obtain materials for answering it; but, as God knows what is in men better than they do themselves, it is also quite reasonable that they should receive with implicit submission whatever He may have been pleased to reveal to them in His word regarding it. The question then is, What does God in His word make known to us with respect to men's actual moral character, and spiritual relations and capacities? This, like every other question in Christian theology, taking the word in its widest sense, should be answered by an exact investigation of the true meaning of the various statements of God's word which bear upon it.

It is surely abundantly evident in general, that the representation given us in Scripture of the actual moral character and spiritual capacities of men, as they come into the world, and grow up in it,—of their relation to God, and of the *tendency* of all this, in its bearing upon their eternal destiny,—is not such as is fitted to lead us to entertain any very exalted conceptions of our own worth and our own powers. The word of God surely represents men—all men—as not only actual transgressors of God's laws, and therefore justly liable to all the consequences of transgression, whatever these may be, but as having also a decided bias or proneness to transgress God's law as an actual feature of their moral nature, from which they cannot by their own strength emancipate themselves, and which renders necessary some special interposition of God, if they are ever to be delivered from it. Those who are, from whatever cause, averse to receive *this* view of the actual moral character and condition of man, have been accustomed, besides attempting to explain away the statements of Scripture, in which it seems to be very plainly taught, to have recourse to the considerations universally conceded, that man did not possess this moral character when he came forth at first from the hand of his Creator—that this was not the character of our first parents when they were created; and then to assert that there is no evidence that man's character has been changed—that our moral character and capacities are different from what those of Adam were. Their opponents, though wishing to rest mainly, in the first

instance,—as the proper ground of their cause,—upon the direct Scripture proof of universal native moral corruption, have no objection to follow them in that direction; being confident that the scriptural representation of the effects of Adam's first sin upon himself and upon his posterity,—the scriptural evidence that in connection with Adam's first sin, and in some way as a consequence of it, an important moral deterioration has been introduced into the human race,—only corroborates and illustrates the views they have been led to take of the import of those scriptural statements which speak directly and immediately of the actual character of all men as they come into the world, and are found there. That Adam sinned against God—that thereby he not only incurred the guilt of transgression, but became deteriorated in his own moral character, and that, in consequence, all his posterity have also become to some extent deteriorated in *their* moral character and capacities, so that they do not now, in fact, bring with them into the world a moral character, a capacity of obeying God's law, equal to what Adam originally possessed, or to what, so far as we know, they would have had, had he not fallen—has been, as a general position, admitted by almost all who have professed to believe in the authority of the sacred Scriptures, except the original Pelagians and the modern Socinians. We need not dwell upon this, but proceed to advert to what is the whole truth upon this subject, as set forth in Scripture and maintained by Augustine.

In considering what is man's actual moral character and capacity, we are investigating a matter of fact; we are seeking, directly and primarily, an answer to the question, What man, in these respects, *is?* And we are not called upon, in the first instance, to take into account any questions that may be raised as to the origin or source, the cause or *rationale*, of what may be found to attach to men, or to be truly predicable of them all in their present actual condition. We might be able to ascertain, with accuracy and precision, what is the actual moral condition and capacity of men, even though we were unable to give any very definite account or explanation of how this state of things had been brought about; and it is desirable that, in seeking to understand this whole subject, and to estimate the amount and validity of the evidence bearing upon it, we should distinguish between these two questions. The difficulties attaching to an

investigation of the origin and the reason of the actual ungodliness and depravity of human nature, have been perhaps too much allowed to affect the proof and the impression of its actual existence as a feature of men's moral condition.

There is distinct and abundant scriptural evidence, bearing directly and immediately upon the question of what man is, and is capable of doing in a moral point of view, independently of any information given us in Scripture concerning the origin or cause of the sad realities of the case. Were men really convinced, upon scriptural grounds, that they do all, in point of fact, bring with them to the world hearts which, when estimated in the light of God's law and of our obligations, are indeed deceitful above all things and desperately wicked—that in us, *i.e.*, in our flesh or natural character, there dwelleth no good thing—that until men become the subjects of renewing and sanctifying grace, the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are only evil and that continually,—they would feel that they are not called upon in right reason to attach, in the first instance, so much weight as is often done to the determination of the questions that may be started as to the manner and circumstances in which this condition of things may have been brought about, and the way in which it is to be explained and vindicated. It would then stand very much upon the same footing as many other things, the existence and reality of which are established by competent and satisfactory evidence appropriate to the case, but the causes or reasons of which are involved in darkness and difficulty; whereas it is too much the practice, in discussing this subject, to burden the consideration of the great primary question, What is the true character of man's moral nature, as a matter of fact, or an actual feature of what man is? with all the additional difficulties attaching to the questions of how he came to be so ungodly and depraved as he appears to be, and of how the fact that he comes into the world possessed of such a moral character, can be vindicated from the charge of making God the author of sin, and destroying man's responsibility. The questions as to the original moral character of our first parents,—the effects of their first sin upon their own moral character,—the identity of the moral character which all men now have, with that which became theirs after they had sinned,—and the connection between their moral character, as fallen, and that of their posterity;—all these questions stand to the question, of what is now the actual moral

character of men, merely in the position of explanations of the actual fact or state of the case,—accounts of the way in which it originated, and may be defended. And it is of some importance, in order to rightly appreciating the evidence—the *rationes decidendi*—that this distinction should be kept in view.

With respect to the subject of guilt, as distinguished from depravity, the bearing of the first sin of Adam has a somewhat closer and more direct connection with the actual condition of man; for, according to the general doctrine of orthodox Calvinistic divines, the guilt of Adam's first sin, imputed to his posterity, is directly a part of the guilt which actually attaches to them, and forms a constituent element of one important feature of their actual condition,—viz., their guilt, their *reatus*, their just liability to punishment, including of course, from the nature of the case, the grounds on which that liability rests. But, as we have already explained, neither guilt, in its proper sense (*reatus*), on the one hand, nor justification in its proper sense, as simply deliverance from guilt or liability to punishment, and acceptance, on the other, entered directly into the original Pelagian controversy, as it was managed in the time of Augustine. It was ungodliness or depravity, and its bearing upon men's actual capacity to do the will of God, and to discharge their obligations, that was then mainly discussed; and it is with that, therefore, at present that we have chiefly to do. The bearing of the first sin of Adam upon his posterity, and generally the connection subsisting between him and his descendants, was indeed discussed between Augustine and his opponents; but, in accordance with the distinction which we have just explained, it was not directly, as if the guilt of his first sin was a portion of the guilt actually attaching to them, but only indirectly, in so far as his first sin and its immediate consequences afforded some explanation of the origin or ground of the deep-seated and pervading depravity or ungodliness, which Scripture and experience unite in proclaiming to be an actual feature of the moral character of all men.

Augustine was enabled to see and unfold, with a very considerable measure of clearness and accuracy, the great truth which has since been more fully developed and illustrated in defence of Calvinistic principles,—viz., that Adam was constituted by God the representative and federal head of his posterity, so that his trial or

probation was virtually and in God's estimation, according to the wise and just constitution or arrangement which He had made,—and which certainly, to say the least, cannot be proved to have been unjust or unfavourable to his posterity,—the trial or probation of the human race; and that thus the transgression of Adam became, in a legal and judicial sense, and without any injustice to them, *theirs*, so that they were justly involved in its proper consequences. If it be indeed the actual fact that men come into the world with ungodly and depraved natures, which certainly and invariably, until they are changed, produce transgressions and shortcomings of God's law—actual violations of moral obligations—then, assuredly, the principle that Adam was constituted, and thereafter was held and regarded by God, as the representative and federal head of his posterity, so that they sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression, is the only one that has ever been propounded which makes even an approach towards affording an explanation of this important fact,—viz., that men do come into the world with their whole moral nature corrupted, and thoroughly perverted, so far as God and His law are concerned. If men are not satisfied with this explanation, so far as it goes, it is their business to devise or suggest a better. But, in place of impartially considering this explanation, which the statements of Scripture plainly enough indicate, and in place of attempting to give any other more satisfactory explanation of a fact which appears in itself to be well established, the more common process is to deny the fact altogether, or to explain it away,—*i.e.*, either to deny that men bring with them into the world an ungodly and depraved moral nature, or to represent the ungodliness and depravity, which may be admited in some sense to attach to it, to be insufficient to affect materially their relation to God, and, without divine interposition, their future destiny; and to be thus scarcely important enough to stand much in need of explanation, as not presenting any very serious difficulty either in speculation or in reality.

All this contributes to illustrate the observation we have made, as to the propriety and importance of first of all ascertaining, if possible, how the actual matter of fact stands, that men who are opposed to orthodox views may be deprived of the unfair advantage of shuffling between the fact and its cause,—the thing itself, and its origin or reason. Let the question be distinctly put, and let it be fairly investigated, until, if possible, a deliberate and

decided conclusion is come to: Do men, or do they not, bring with them into the world ungodly and depraved natures? And if they do, have we any practical test or standard of the strength, efficacy, and consequences of this ungodliness or depravity, which actually, and in fact, attaches to them as a feature of their moral character? When the matter of fact is once ascertained, it will then be proper to consider, if it seem necessary, both, on the one hand, how it originated and how it may be explained; and, on the other, to what conclusions, theoretical and practical, it may lead. When the matter is viewed in this light—when the question is thus considered by itself, and in the light of its direct and appropriate evidence—there seems to be no very great difficulty in coming to a decided determination regarding it.

There are surely many sufficiently plain statements in Scripture which assure us that men have all by nature,—*i.e.*, as they actually come into the world, and until some important change is effected upon them,—a bias, proneness, or tendency to disregard God, to neglect the duties which He has imposed upon them, and to break His laws. Experience, or an actual survey of the history and condition of the human race, fully confirms this doctrine of Scripture, and shows that this tendency is universal,—extending to all men,—and is so strong and powerful as never in any instance to be overcome by the unaided efforts of men themselves, or by any combination of external circumstances; or, to adopt the language of Jonathan Edwards, in his great work on Original Sin, "that all mankind constantly in all ages, without fail in any one instance, run into moral evil," and "that, consequently, all mankind are under the influence of a prevailing effectual tendency in their nature to sin and wickedness." There are, indeed, many men who do not seem to be at all aware of this tendency to sin as a feature in their character, and not a few even who openly deny it, and appeal to their own consciousness to disprove it. This, however, is no sufficient argument against the reality and universality of the alleged tendency; for it *may be*, and the Scripture plainly enough indicates that *it is*, one feature or result of this very tendency itself, and of its immediate consequences, to render men blind and insensible to its own existence. Many men, who once disbelieved and opposed this doctrine, have come to be firmly persuaded of its truth; while none who ever really and intelligently believed it, have ever been brought to re-

ject it; and there are few men whose consciousness, if allowed full and fair scope, and subjected to a skilful cross-examination upon some materials which the word of God furnishes, would not be brought to render some testimony, more or less explicit, to its truth. In the very nature of this doctrine, or rather of the fact which it announces, it is very manifest that men are imperatively called upon to ascertain whether it be true, and to be familiar with the grounds on which their conviction of its truth is based. And when this conviction is once reached, then is the proper time to investigate both its origin and its results—its causes and its consequences—taking care, however, that neither the difficulties and perplexities that may attend an investigation of its origin or cause, nor the alarming consequences that may flow from it, when practically applied and followed out, shall be allowed to shake the conviction in regard to the actual matter of fact,—this feature of man's moral character, which has been satisfactorily established by competent and appropriate evidence.

Now the Scripture, as we have mentioned, does give us some explanation concerning its origin and source, though certainly not such as to remove every difficulty, and to render the subject in its principles perfectly level to our comprehension; and the substance of what the Scripture makes known to us upon this point was much more fully and accurately brought out by Augustine in his controversy with the Pelagians, than ever it had been before, and has been already briefly explained. No other reasonable explanation of the fact has ever been given,—we might say, has ever been attempted. Men have attempted to explain the fact of the universal prevalence of *actual* sin among mankind, without referring it to a proneness or tendency to sin, which men now bring with them into the world, and which constitutes an actual feature in their moral character; but for this proneness or tendency itself operating universally and certainly, when once admitted or found to be an actual reality, no other explanation has ever been proposed. Some men, indeed, have stopped short with the fact itself, received upon scriptural authority, without seeking, or even admitting, any explanation of its origin or cause; in other words, they have held the fact of the actual and entire corruption and depravity of human nature, without receiving or taking into account the federal headship of our first parent—the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity—or its derivation in any proper

sense from Adam and his first transgression. This raises the question, whether or not the Scripture gives any countenance to the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity; and whether, if it does, this principle does anything towards explaining the fact of the universal corruption and depravity of human nature. Augustine maintained and proved that Adam's sin involved all his posterity in this moral corruption and depravity, and did so, because it was held or reckoned as theirs; although, as has been already explained, he did not apply the imputation of Adam's first sin in the twofold aspect in which it has been commonly presented by Calvinistic divines,—as the ground at once of a portion of the guilt or *reatus* which attaches to them, and as, at the same time, affording some explanation of their universal actual moral depravity,—but only in the latter of these aspects. God did not create man with this prevailing proneness or tendency to sin. It must have been in some way the result of transgression or disobedience. The only act of disobedience or transgression to which it can be ascribed, or with which it can be supposed to be penally connected—and the connection must have been of a penal character—is that of our first parents; and the only way in which that transgression could operate upon us, so as to affect our moral character, is by its being imputed to us, or held and accounted as ours. This, again, receives its explanation from the principle that God constituted Adam the representative or federal head of mankind, so that his trial was actually, and in a judicial sense, the trial of the human race,—and his fall and sin the fall and sin of all his posterity.

Had nothing further been revealed to us in Scripture than the mere fact that all men have, and bring with them into the world, ungodly and depraved natures, it would have been our duty to have received this upon God's authority, though He might have given us no explanation whatever of it, and though we might have been utterly unable to devise any; and even as matters stand, our *first* and most *important* duty in regard to this subject is just to ascertain whether this be so, in point of fact, or not. But the Scripture does plainly trace the fact which it asserts of the universal corruption and depravity of man's nature, to our connection with Adam, and to the first sin of our first parent, and does contain plain enough indications that this connection is based upon a constitution, arrangement, or covenant, which God made,—which

is in itself perfectly equitable,—and in virtue of which Adam's trial or probation was to be the trial or probation of the whole human race. This is information given us in Scripture, in addition to the making known the mere fact of the universal prevalence of actual ungodliness and depravity as a feature of human nature, and is to be received and submitted to simply as being revealed; while, at the same time, there is no great difficulty in seeing that this additional information does throw *some* light upon the important fact with which it is connected, or does contribute something towards explaining it. The subject is, indeed, still a mysterious one, and we have no right to expect that we should fully comprehend it; but the statements which we have briefly explained, can, we think, be all established, with more or less clearness or certainty, from the word of God. They exhaust the information which is given us there upon the different points involved in this matter, and they form a compact and intelligible scheme, which unfolds the whole subject in such a way that each part corroborates and illustrates the other.

The difficulties connected with what seems to be taught in Scripture, as to the bearing of Adam's first sin upon his own moral character, and that of all his descendants, and with the alleged imputation of that sin to his posterity, should not in reason affect our investigation of the question, as to what the actual moral character of mankind is, or the decision to which we may come regarding it. The view of the origin and cause of the moral depravity of man's nature, which is plainly intimated in Scripture, does assuredly not make the great fact itself more incredible or improbable, or weaken the force of the evidence on which it rests. And it is only when the fact is fully established, that men are warranted to investigate into its origin or cause. It is then only that they will be likely to enter upon this investigation with a due measure of impartiality and diligence; and when due impartiality and diligence are employed, men not only will not find, in difficulties that may be connected with the scriptural representation of the origin and cause of this great fact, any ground for doubting the reality of the fact itself, established upon its own proper evidence; but they will see that the scriptural explanation of the fact, though it may not remove every difficulty, does tend in no inconsiderable degree to throw light upon it,—that, when the whole of what the Scripture teaches upon the subject is viewed

in combination, it is all fitly framed together, and that the different branches of the great general doctrine upon this point afford mutual strength and support to each other.

So much for the retrospect, or looking back from the fact established, or assumed to be so, of the moral corruption or depravity of human nature, to its source or cause. Let us now briefly advert to the prospect, or looking forward to the consequences that result from it. In the Pelagian controversy, as understood in Augustine's time, the consequences of the fall were viewed chiefly, not in their connection with guilt, as rendering necessary, if men were to be saved, some provision for securing pardon and acceptance; but in their connection with depravity, as rendering necessary some provision for changing men's natures, and as in some measure determining the nature and character of the provision that was needful. And here the principal and primary question amounts in substance to this: Is this corruption or depravity, attaching to all men as an actual feature of the moral nature which they bring with them into this world, total or partial? If it be only partial, then man still has by nature something about him that is really good, in the proper sense of the word,—something that is really in accordance with the requirements of God's law, that enables him to do something in the way of really discharging the obligations which lie upon him as a creature of God, and of effecting, or at least aiding to effect, by his own strength and efforts, his own entire deliverance from its influence. If, on the other hand, the corruption or depravity which attaches to man's moral nature be total, then it follows that the positions now referred to are wholly unfounded, and that statements directly the reverse may justly be made with regard to men's qualities and capacities, so far as concerns their relation to God and His laws, their fitness to discharge the obligations which lie upon them, and their ability to exert themselves any real influence upon their deliverance from depravity, and their meetness for heaven.

Our Confession of Faith says,—and the word of God fully proves it,—that in virtue of this corruption or depravity, which attaches to all men by nature, they are "dead in sin, and *wholly* defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body," and that they are "thereby utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." This, and nothing less, Scripture and experience concur in showing to be

the real import and amount of the corruption which, in fact, attaches to man's moral nature; and while the direct and immediate result of this truth, proved or admitted, is, that men should, in the belief of it, be fully aware of, and should constantly realize, their own utter worthlessness and helplessness in regard to all spiritual and eternal things, and cherish a frame of mind and heart corresponding to this awful reality, which either now attaches, or did once attach, to every one of them,—its more general and extended importance, both theoretically and practically, is to be seen in its bearing upon the question of what is the nature, character, and source of the provision that may be adequate and needful for removing it. It is here, of course, that the subject of original sin and human depravity connects with that of divine grace, or the special gracious agency of God, in converting and sanctifying men,—a subject which formed, perhaps, the most prominent topic of discussion in the controversy between Augustine and the Pelagians. Here, too, comes in the important and difficult subject of free-will; about the precise mode of stating, defending, and applying which, there has been considerable diversity of sentiment, even among those who in the main agreed in the whole substance of what they believed regarding the moral nature and spiritual capacity of fallen man. Indeed, the subject of the freedom or bondage, the liberty or servitude, of the human will,—*i.e.*, of the will of men as they are, as they come into the world, with a corrupt and depraved moral nature,—may be regarded as forming, in some sense, the connecting link between the doctrine of original sin, and that of God's grace in the conversion of sinners. The doctrine of man's *total* depravity implies, or immediately leads to, that of the actual servitude or bondage of the human will. And this, again, when once proved, would be sufficient of itself to establish the doctrine of God's special gracious agency as the ultimate source, and only real cause of, all that is truly good in man, even although this latter doctrine had not been so clearly and fully established by the express declarations of Scripture. It is in this connection, *and in this connection alone*, that the servitude or bondage of the human will was asserted by Augustine, and, what is much more important, is asserted in our Confession of Faith. The Confession, after laying down the general principle about the natural liberty of the will of man already quoted, and asserting that "man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to

will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God, but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it," proceeds in these words: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

I cannot enter upon any detailed discussion of this subject, though I will afterwards return to it; but I would just remark, that I am by no means satisfied that any other doctrine of necessity—any other view of the bondage or servitude of the human will—than that which represents it as implied in, or deduced from, the moral depravity which attaches to all men, as an actual feature of their character, can be fully established, either from Scripture or reason. The actual inability of men to will or to do what is really good,—and this is the only necessity under which they lie that is of any material practical importance,—seems in Scripture to be always connected with, or deduced from, *not* their mere position as the creatures of God's hand, and the subjects of His moral government,—although, of course, they are *in these characters* wholly subject at all times, and in all circumstances, to His guidance and control,—not any general laws which He has impressed upon His intelligent creatures, or upon the human mind as such, or on its power of volition, or other faculties or operations; *but* it seems to be connected with, or deduced from, that thorough ungodliness, or entire moral corruption, which attaches to the nature of man, *as fallen*. That the ungodliness or corruption which attaches to man's nature as fallen, does produce or imply a bondage or servitude of the will, by which men are, in fact, "unable by their own strength to convert themselves, or to prepare themselves thereunto," is evident in the nature of the case, and is clearly taught in Scripture. That any other kind or species of servitude, or necessity, attaches to the human will, is not by any means so certain. The only ground on which it can be alleged to rest is a metaphysical speculation, which, whether true or false, ought to be carefully distinguished from truths actually taught in Scripture; and which, while not itself positively sanctioned by Scripture, cannot, I think, be shown to be indispensably necessary for the exposition, illustration, or defence of any of those great doctrines, the belief of which is required in the word of God, and

the knowledge of which is necessary in order to an accurate acquaintance with the way of salvation.

Sec. III.—*Conversion—Sovereign and Efficacious Grace.*

The controversy between Augustine and his opponents turned, as we have said, to a large extent, upon the nature and import, the necessity, grounds, and results of that grace of God, which, in *some sense*, was universally admitted to be manifested in preparing men for heaven. That a certain character, and a certain mode of acting, in obedience to God's law, were in fact necessary, in order to men's attaining final happiness, and that men were in some sense indebted to God's grace or favour for realizing this, was universally conceded. It was conceded by Pelagius and his immediate followers, and it is conceded by modern Socinians; but then the explanation which these parties gave of this grace of God, which they professed to admit, made grace to be no grace, and practically made men, and not God, the authors of their own salvation, which the Socinians, consistently enough, guarantee at length to all men. With the original Pelagians and the modern Socinians, the grace of God, by which men are, in this life, led to that mode of acting which, in fact, stands connected with their welfare in the next,—(for even Socinians commonly admit some punishment of wicked men in the future world, though they regard it as only temporary),—consists in these two things: First, the powers and capacities with which He has endowed man's nature, and which are possessed by all men as they come into the world, along with that general assistance which He gives in His ordinary providence, in upholding and aiding them in their own exercise and improvement of these powers and capacities; and, secondly, in the revelation which He has given them to guide and direct them, and in the providential circumstances in which He may have placed them. This view of the grace of God, of course, assumes the non-existence of any such moral corruption attaching to men, as implies any inability on their part, in any sense, to obey the will of God, or to do what He requires of them; and, in accordance with this view of what man is and can do, ascribes to him a power of doing by his own strength, and without any special supernatural, divine assistance, all that is necessary for his ultimate welfare. This view is too flatly contradictory to the

plain statements of Scripture, and especially to what we are told there concerning the agency of the Holy Ghost, to have been ever very generally admitted by men who professed to receive the Bible as the word of God; and, accordingly, there has been a pretty general recognition of the necessity, in addition to whatever powers or capacities God may have given to men, and whatever aids or facilities of an external or objective kind He may have afforded them, of a subjective work upon them through special supernatural agency; and the question, whether particular individuals or bodies of men were involved more or less in the errors of semi-Pelagianism, or taught the true doctrine of Scripture, is, in part, to be determined by the views which they have maintained concerning the nature, character, and results of this special supernatural agency of God, in fitting men for the enjoyment of His own presence.

Even the original Pelagians admitted the existence of supernatural gracious influences exerted by God upon men; but then they denied that they were *necessary* in order to the production of any of those things which accompany salvation, and held that when bestowed they merely enabled men to attain them more easily than they could have done without them; while they also explicitly taught that men *merited* them, or received them as the meritorious reward of their previous improvement of their own natural powers. An assertion of the *necessity* of a supernatural gracious work of God upon men's moral nature, in order to the production of what is, in point of fact, indispensable to their salvation, has been usually regarded as necessary to entitle men to the designation of semi-Pelagians,—a designation which comprehends all who, while admitting the necessity of a supernatural work of God, come short of the full scriptural views of the *grounds* of this necessity, and of the source, character, and results of the work itself. The original Pelagian system upon this point is intelligible and definite, and so is the scriptural system of Augustine; while any intermediate view, whether it may or may not be what can, with historical correctness, be called semi-Pelagianism, is marked by obscurity and confusion. Leaving out of view the proper Pelagian or Socinian doctrine upon this subject, and confining our attention to the scriptural system of Augustine on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to those confused and indefinite notions which fall short of it, though not to such an

extent as the doctrines of the Pelagians and the Socinians, we would remark that it is conceded upon both sides: First, that before men are admitted into heaven they must repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and lead thereafter a life of new obedience; and, secondly, that men have a moral nature *so far* tainted by depravity, that this indispensable process cannot in any instance be carried through without a supernatural gracious work of God's Spirit upon them.

These two propositions embody most important and fundamental truths, clearly and fully taught in Scripture, and essential to a right comprehension of the way of salvation. Men who deny them may be justly regarded as refusing to submit to the authority of God's word, and as rejecting the counsel of God against themselves; while, on the other hand, men who honestly and intelligently receive them, though coming short of the whole scriptural truth in expounding and applying them, may be regarded as maintaining all that is fundamental upon this subject; by which I mean,—in accordance with the common Protestant doctrine of fundamentals as brought out in the controversy with the Church of Rome,—that some men who have held nothing more than this have afforded satisfactory evidence that they themselves were born again of the word of God, and have been honoured as the instruments of converting others through the preaching of the gospel. But while this is true, and ought not to be forgotten, it is of at least equal importance to observe, that many who have professed to receive these two propositions in the general terms in which we have stated them, have given too good ground to believe that this professed reception of them was decidedly defective either in integrity or in intelligence,—have so explained them, or rather explained them away, as to deprive them of all real meaning and efficacy, and practically to establish the power of man to save himself, and to prepare for heaven, upon the ruins of the free grace of God, which is manifested just as fully in the sanctification as in the justification of sinners. And hence the importance and necessity of clearly and definitely understanding what is the scriptural truth upon these subjects, lest we should be deceived by vague and indefinite plausibilities, which seem to establish the grace of God, while they in fact destroy it. Defective and erroneous views upon this subject are usually connected with defective and erroneous views in regard to the

totality of the moral corruption which attaches to men by nature, and of their consequent inability to do anything that is really spiritually good. It is manifest that any error or defect in men's views upon this subject will naturally and necessarily lead to erroneous and defective views of the nature, character, and results of that gracious work of God, by which man is led to will and to do what is good and well-pleasing in His sight.

When those who admit in general the necessity of a gracious work of God's Spirit upon men, in order to their repenting and believing the gospel, have yet erroneous and defective views upon the subject of divine grace, they usually manifest this by magnifying the power or influence of the truth or word of God,—by underrating the difficulty of repenting and believing,—by ascribing to men some remains of moral power for effecting these results, and some real and proper activity in the work of turning to God,—and by representing the work of God's Spirit as consisting chiefly, if not exclusively, in helping to impress the truth upon men's minds, or, more generally, rendering some aid or assistance to the original powers of man, and to the efforts which he makes. It is by such notions as these, though often very obscurely developed, insinuated rather than asserted, and sometimes mixed up with much that seems sound and scriptural, that the true doctrine of the gracious work of God in the conversion of sinners has been often undermined and altogether overthrown. These men have, more or less distinctly, confounded the word or the truth—which is merely the dead instrument—with the Spirit, who is the real agent, or efficient cause of the whole process. They have restricted the gracious work of the Spirit to the illumination of men's understandings through the instrumentality of the truth, as if their will did not require to be renewed, and as if all that was needful was that men should be aided intellectually to perceive what was their true state and condition by nature, and what provision had been made for their salvation in Christ, and then they would certainly repent and believe as a matter of course, without needing specially to have the enmity of their hearts to God and His truth subdued. They have represented the gracious work of the Spirit chiefly, if not exclusively, as co-operating with men, and aiding them in the work for which they have some natural capacity, though not enough to produce of themselves the necessary result, as if there was little or no need of *preventing* or *pre-*

venient grace, or grace going before, in order that man may work or act at all in believing and turning to God. These men are usually very anxious to represent faith in Jesus Christ as to some extent the work of men's own powers, the result of their own principles; and Augustine admits that he had some difficulty in satisfying himself for a time that faith was really and properly the gift of God, and was wrought in men by the operation of His Spirit, though this doctrine is very plainly and explicitly taught in Scripture. Much pains have been taken to explain how natural and easy saving faith is, to reduce it to great simplicity, to bring it down as it were to the level of the lowest capacity,—sometimes with better and more worthy motives, but sometimes also, we fear, in order to diminish, if not to exclude, the necessity of a supernatural preventing work of God's Spirit in producing it. And then, as repentance and conversion, as well as the whole process of sanctification, are beyond all doubt inseparably connected with the belief of the gospel, the way is thus paved for ascribing to man himself some share in the work of his deliverance from depravity, and his preparation for heaven.

One of the most subtle forms of the various attempts which have been made to obscure the work of God's Spirit in this matter, is that which represents faith as being antecedent—in the order of nature at least, though not of time—to the introduction or implantation of spiritual life into the soul of man, dead in sins and trespasses. This notion is founded upon these two grounds: first, upon a misapprehension of the full import of the scriptural doctrine, that man is dead in sin,—as if this death in sin, while implying a moral inability *directly* to love God, and to give true spiritual obedience to His law, did not equally imply a moral inability to apprehend aright divine truth, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, secondly, upon a misapplication or perversion of the scriptural principle, that men are born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth,—as if this, while no doubt implying that the truth has been effectually brought to bear upon the mind before the process of being born again has been completed, so that the man is in the full exercise of new spiritual life, implied, moreover, that this efficacious operation of the truth must precede, in the order of nature, the whole work by which the Spirit *originates* the process of vivification; and the object and tendency of this notion, based upon these two grounds,

are to produce the impression that men, *through believing*, are able to do something towards making themselves, or at least towards becoming, spiritually alive, and thereby superseding to some extent the necessity of a supernatural work of God's Spirit in a point of primary and vital importance, intimately connected with the salvation of men. Man *is* dead in sin; the making him alive, the restoring him to life, is represented in Scripture as, in every part of the process, from its commencement to its conclusion, the work of God's Spirit. The instrumentality of the truth or the word is, indeed, employed in the process; but in the nature of the case, and in accordance with what is clearly taught in Scripture, there must, antecedently—at least in the order of nature, though not of time—to the truth being so brought to bear upon men's minds as to produce instrumentally any of its appropriate effects, be a work of God's Spirit, whereby spiritual life is implanted, and a capacity of perceiving and submitting to the truth, which had been hitherto rejected, is communicated,—a capacity which, indeed, previously existed, so far as concerns the mere intellectual framework of man's mental constitution—the mere psychological faculties which he possesses as being still a man, though fallen—but which was practically useless because of the entire bondage or servitude of his will, which required to be renewed, and could be renewed only by the immediate agency of God's Spirit. The doctrine of God's word upon this subject is fully maintained only when man is really regarded as being in his natural condition, morally dead to all that is really good, and when the first implantation of spiritual life, and all that results from it, including faith as well as repentance, turning to God and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ, is honestly, and without reserve or equivocation, traced to the supernatural agency of God's Spirit as its only efficient cause.

One other important point connected with this subject, which, from the time of Augustine till the present day, has been largely discussed, is what has been called the efficacy, or invincibility, or irresistibility of grace. Pelagians and semi-Pelagians have all united in denying the irresistibility of grace, and have virtually maintained—for it really comes to this in substance—that whatever power the Holy Spirit may put forth upon men in order to convert and renew them, it is in their power to resist it all, and to escape, so to speak, unconverted and unrenewed; while Augus-

tine maintained that the grace of God, the power of the Spirit in the Elect, always prevailed or overcame, and certainly took effect, whatever resistance men might make to it. This doctrine has been held in substance ever since by orthodox divines, though there has been some difference of opinion among them as to what were the terms in which the substance of the scriptural views upon the subject could be most fitly and accurately expressed.

Augustine, in asserting the invincibility or irresistibility of grace, did not mean,—and those who in subsequent times have embraced his general system of doctrine as scriptural, did not intend to convey the idea,—that man was compelled to do that which was good, or that he was forced to repent and believe against his will, whether he would or not, as the doctrine is commonly misrepresented; but merely that he was certainly and effectually made willing, by the renovation of his will through the power of God, *whenever that power was put forth in a measure* SUFFICIENT *or* ADEQUATE *to produce the result.* Augustine, and those who have adopted his system, did not mean to deny that men may, in some sense and to some extent, resist the Spirit, the possibility of which is clearly indicated in Scripture; inasmuch as they have most commonly held that, to use the language of our Confession, "persons who are not elected, and who finally perish, may have some common operations of the Spirit," which, of course, they resist and throw off. The truth is, that this doctrine of the certain efficacy or irresistibility of grace is closely and necessarily connected with the doctrine of God's purposes or decrees,—the great doctrine of predestination or election, which constitutes an essential part of the Pelagian controversy; and, indeed, it may be regarded as forming the connecting link between the doctrine of converting and renewing grace, as the true cause of all that is good in man, and that of personal election to everlasting life, as the source to which God's effectual operation in working faith in men, and thereby uniting them to Christ, is to be traced. It is the Spirit of God whose supernatural agency restores men to life, and effects in them all that is indeed spiritually good. Whenever this agency is put forth in strength sufficient to effect the object of converting a sinner and uniting him to Christ by faith, it certainly does effect it, just because God had resolved to effect it, and has in consequence put forth the power necessary for doing so. What God does in time, He from eternity decreed to do,

because in the Infinite Mind there is no succession of time,—all things are at once and eternally present to it. When God exercises power, He is carrying into effect an eternal purpose; when He converts a sinner, He is executing a decree which He formed before the world began—before all ages.

The main questions connected with this important subject are these—First, Is God, when He sends forth His almighty Spirit,—when He converts a sinner and unites him to Christ,—influenced, in doing so, by a regard to anything existing in the man, by which *he* is distinguished from others, or by anything present in him? or is He influenced solely by His own purpose, previously formed,—formed from eternity,—of converting and saving that man? And, secondly, Does this general principle of an eternal purpose to save some men and to pass by the others, or to leave them in their natural condition of guilt and depravity, apply to and regulate God's dealings with all the individuals of the human race? It is admitted by most of the opponents of predestination, properly so called, that God foresees from eternity whatsoever comes to pass; and that since He has foreseen all events, even those which embody the eternal fate of His intelligent creatures, and thus had them present to His mind, He may be said in a certain sense to have foreordained or foreappointed them; so that the question virtually and practically comes to this—Does God predestinate men to eternal life because He foresees that they will exercise faith and repentance? or does He foresee this because He has, of His own good pleasure, chosen them to faith and repentance, and resolved to bestow these gifts upon them in order that they may be saved in the way which He has appointed? If faith and repentance are men's acts, in such a sense that they can exercise them by their own unaided efforts, without God's agency, and can abstain from exercising them, whatever influence He may exert upon them; in other words, if the preventing and invincible grace of God be not the real source and efficient cause of all that is good in men, then the former view *may* be true, and election to life *may* rest upon the ground of faith and repentance foreseen; but if not, then the latter view must be true, and it must be certain that God has, of His own good pleasure, of His own sovereign purpose, elected some men to everlasting life, and in the mere execution of this purpose, has, in His own good time, given them, or wrought in them, faith and repentance.

It is not disputed that God usually gives men spiritual blessings—taking that expression in its widest sense—in a certain order, one being in some sense determined by what has preceded it; but the question is, whether the *commencement* of spiritual life wrought by God, and the whole series of spiritual blessings conferred by Him, viewed collectively and in the mass, can be really traced to any other cause or source than just this eternal purpose, founded on the counsel of His own will, to save some men, and His actually executing this purpose in time, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which He has established for the salvation of sinners. There is really no medium between an election to life, resting as its foundation upon the faith, repentance, and holiness of individuals foreseen,—which is really no election, but a mere act of recognition,—and a choice or selection of individuals originating in the good pleasure of God, without any other cause known to, or knowable by, us,—a choice or selection followed up in due time, as its certain and necessary result, by the actual bestowal by God upon the individuals elected, of all that is necessary for securing their salvation. The latter of these views, we think, it can be proved, is clearly taught in Scripture; and though it no doubt involves much that is mysterious and inexplicable—much that may either call forth presumptuous objections, or profitably exercise men's faith and humility,—yet it certainly accords most fully with the actual phenomena of the moral and spiritual world, and it surely presents God in His true character and real position as the rightful and omnipotent governor of the world, the arbiter of the eternal destinies of His intelligent creatures. The former view—the only one which can be taken if that of unconditional election be rejected,—besides that it is inconsistent with the statements of Scripture, which plainly supports the opposite doctrine, is liable to the fatal and unanswerable objection, that it leaves everything bearing upon the character and eternal condition of all the individuals of our race undetermined, and, indeed, uninfluenced, by their Creator and Governor, and virtually beyond His control; and degrades Him to the condition of a mere spectator, who only sees what is going on among His creatures, or foresees what is to take place without Himself determining it, or exerting any real efficiency in the production of it, and who must be guided by what He thus sees or foresees in all His dealings with them. There is really no medium between

these two positions. God either really governs the world, and determines the character and destinies of His intelligent creatures; or else these creatures are practically independent of Him, the absolute regulators of their own conduct, and the omnipotent arbiters of their own destinies. And it is surely much more becoming our condition and capacities, even though there was less clear scriptural evidence upon the subject than there is, to lean to the side of maintaining fully the divine supremacy,—of relying implicitly upon the divine justice, holiness, and faithfulness,—and resolving all difficulties, which we cannot solve, into our own ignorance and incapacity; than to that of replying against God,—arraigning the principles of His moral administration,—and practically excluding Him from the government of the most important department of the world which He has created, and ever sustains.

Sec. IV.—*Perseverance of the Saints.*

Another topic of primary importance, which was treated of fully and formally by Augustine in his controversy with the Pelagians, is what is commonly called the perseverance of the saints;—or the doctrine that men who have once been really enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, and have been born again of the word of God, do never totally and finally fall away from a state of grace, but are certainly enabled to persevere, and are preserved unto eternal salvation.

This doctrine of perseverance is manifestly a necessary part of the general scheme of Christian doctrine, which Augustine did so much to expound and defend; and what is still more important,—for it is not very safe for men to place *much* reliance upon their own mere perception of the logical connection of doctrines in regard to divine things,—it is, we are persuaded, clearly taught in the statements of Scripture. If the doctrines to which we have already adverted are, indeed, contained in the word of God, the men of whom it is asserted that they will certainly persevere and be saved, are placed in *this* condition,—viz., that God has from eternity chosen *them* to everlasting life; and that in the execution of this purpose or decree, He has given them faith and repentance, He has united them to Christ, and renewed their natures. All this, which could be effected by no power but His own, He has done, and done for the express purpose of saving them with an

eternal salvation. Of men so placed—treated by God in such a way for such a purpose—it may surely be asserted with perfect confidence, that He will certainly enable them to persevere, and will thereby secure their eternal welfare. Had God formed no definite purpose of mercy in regard to individuals of our fallen race, we could not have been certain that any would have been saved. Were men able to convert themselves, and to prepare for heaven, in the exercise of their own natural powers and capacities, while it is possible that they might succeed, it is equally possible of any of them, apart from God's electing purpose, that they might fall off and ultimately fail. Were divine grace exerted in such a way and in such a measure, that it was still in the power of any man, in the exercise of his own natural and inherent capacities, to resist it, or to remain unaffected by it, then neither God nor man could speak with anything like certainty in any case of the ultimate result; whereas the very different and opposite state of things, in regard to all these important subjects, which the word of God unfolds to us, and which we have already explained in treating of the subjects of efficacious grace and predestination, makes the final perseverance of all who are thus placed and treated, not only practicable, but ascertainable and certain.

The connection which subsists among these different doctrines, —original and total depravity; converting, efficacious, or invincible grace; eternal election, and final perseverance,—the relation in which they all stand to each other,—the full, compact, and comprehensive view which, in combination, they exhibit of the leading departments and whole substance of divine revelation, of what God has unfolded to us concerning Himself and concerning our race, concerning His plans and operations, and our capacities and destinies,—all this greatly confirms their truth and reality, as it exhibits them all as affording to each other mutual strength and support.

It is right, however, to mention, that in regard to the subject of perseverance there is a certain amount of error and apparent inconsistency to be found in Augustine's works. He held, decidedly and consistently, that all who are predestinated, or elected to everlasting life, are certainly and infallibly enabled to persevere, and do all in fact attain to salvation; but he sometimes writes, as if he thought that men who had been the subjects of converting and renewing grace, might fall away and finally perish.

He held, indeed, that this falling away was of itself a conclusive proof that they had not been elected, and so far he was perfectly orthodox and consistent; but he does not seem to have been quite so certain that, though not elected, and therefore finally perishing, some men might not have been brought for a time by God's grace under the influence of sanctified principles or real holiness, —and yet totally and finally fall away. This notion was inconsistent with the general principles of his system, and is certainly not sanctioned or required by anything contained in Scripture. The Scripture, by what it tells us of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of sin, of the impossibility of men knowing with anything like absolute certainty the true state of the character of others,—by reserving the power of searching the heart to God alone,—and by sanctioning the principle obviously involved in the declaration of the apostle, "They went out from us, because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us,"—affords us abundant materials for explaining or accounting for all anomalous cases, all apparent instances of apostasy. And it is not, after all, quite certain that Augustine's statements upon this subject necessarily imply more than that cases of apostasy occurred in individuals who, *so far as man can judge*, had fairly entered upon the path that leads to heaven,—a position which no one disputes.

If his error really was more serious than this, it is not very difficult to see what tempted him to adopt it: it was the notion which was held in a gross and utterly anti-evangelical form by many of the fathers, and from the taint of which Augustine was not altogether free, of making baptism stand in some measure both for justification and regeneration. A man who rightly understands the nature of justification as a judicial or forensic art, and the true connection both of justification and regeneration with faith in Jesus Christ, by which we are united to Him, and who along with this believes in personal election to life, will not easily fall into the error which Augustine seems in some measure to have imbibed. The man who has thoroughly clear and scriptural views of what is involved in the change that takes place, both as respects men's state and character, when they are united by faith to Christ, will not readily believe that any in whom *this* change has been effected by God, will be allowed to fall away and to perish, even though he should not have very clear and distinct views

—which, however, Augustine had—upon the subject of personal election. Augustine's error and inconsistency, or rather perhaps his obscurity and confusion, upon this point, is thus clearly enough traceable to what has been called the sacramental principle, as implying an exaggerated sense of the necessity and efficacy of outward ordinances,—from which scarcely any of the fathers, except those who had personally associated with the apostles, are altogether free, and which still continues to be one of Satan's chief contrivances for perverting the gospel of the grace of God, and ruining the souls of men.

We may mention, as a sort of set-off to this defect or error of Augustine's, that Arminius and his immediate followers before the Synod of Dort, while rejecting the other leading doctrines of the Augustinian or Calvinistic system, did not venture at first to deny the doctrine of perseverance, but professed for a time that they had not fully made up their mind regarding it. In the Conference at the Hague—Collatio Hagiensis—held in the year 1611, after the death of Arminius, the Remonstrants, or Arminians, after stating fully the provisions made in the gospel for enabling believers to grow in knowledge and in grace, proceed to say: "Sed an illi ipsi negligentiâ suâ, principium illud, quo sustentantur in Christo, deserere non possint, et præsentem mundum iterum amplecti, a sancta doctrina ipsis semel tradita deficere, conscientiæ naufragium facere, a gratia excidere; penitius ex sacra Scriptura esset expendendum, antequam illud cum plena animi tranquillitate et plerophoria docere possimus."* Before the Synod of Dort in 1618, however, they had made up their mind on this question, and decidedly rejected the doctrine of perseverance. Something similar to this occurred in the case of John Wesley, whose theological views were almost wholly identical with those of Arminius. In the earlier part of his life, in 1743, he was, he says, "inclined to believe that there is a state attainable in this life from which a man cannot finally fall." But this doctrine he was afterwards led to renounce.†

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* Amesii Coronis ad Collationem Hagiensem, p. 285. Amstel. 1650.

† Watson's Life of Wesley (Watson's Works, vol. v., p. 227).

CHAPTER XII.

THE WORSHIP OF SAINTS AND IMAGES.

In considering the testimony of the early church—the church of the first three centuries—on the subjects which are still controverted among professing Christians, I adverted very briefly to its bearing upon those topics usually comprehended under the head of the charge of idolatry, which Protestants commonly adduce against the Church of Rome, especially the worship or *cultus* which she renders to saints and images. Romanists cannot adduce from this period any testimony in favour of the doctrine and practice of their church upon these subjects, though it is true that an unwarrantable and excessive veneration for the memory, and even the relics, of martyrs and confessors had begun to show itself even in this early age; and this was, no doubt, the germ and origin of the gross polytheism which soon after began to prevail. Mr Isaac Taylor, in the second volume of his "Ancient Christianity," has proved that what he calls Demonolatry, or the religious worship and invocation of dead men, prevailed largely in the latter part of the fourth and in the fifth century, and was sanctioned by the most eminent men whom the church then contained, and even by Augustine himself. This had sprung up so readily, though by a gradual process, from the veneration paid to martyrs in the earlier period, and it is so natural to the mind of man, when true religion is in a decaying state, that it came to prevail almost universally in the church, without giving rise to any controversial discussions which might mark the stages of its progress. There can be no doubt that, in the fifth and sixth centuries, there prevailed largely in the church a worship which might be fairly called polytheistic, and on which the monotheism of Mahomet was a decided improvement; though there is no sufficient evidence of the introduction of the formal invocation of saints into the public and prescribed services of the church till the seventh century.

The veneration of relics in the Christian church preceded the veneration of images, whether paintings or statues; and it is certain that there is no trace of image-worship so long as the Christians were engaged in open conflict with pagan idolaters, and therefore bound to abstain from the more palpable and offensive forms in which pagan idolatry manifested itself. In the course of the sixth century, after paganism was finally suppressed under Justinian, we find evidences of pictures of Christ and the martyrs being introduced into the churches for ornament, though there is no proof as yet that any religious worship or *cultus* was paid to them. The process, however, of the corruption of true religion advanced; and as at once the cause and the effect of this, the introduction into the church of the views and practices of paganism continued to go on with increasing rapidity, until in the eighth century, some reaction having arisen against the veneration now generally paid to images, the great contest took place upon this subject, which was certainly carried on with carnal weapons, produced much bloodshed and many crimes, and terminated at last in the establishment of the worship of images, as an ordinary part of public worship, both in the Eastern and the Western Churches,—with this only difference, that in the Eastern or Greek Church, the worship was, and is, restricted to paintings of Christ and the saints, while in the Western or Latin Church it was extended to statues as well as to pictures. The most important epoch in the history of this contest about image-worship, is the second Council of Nice, held in 787, received as an œcumenical council both by the Greek and Latin Churches, and referred to by the Council of Trent, and by Romish writers in general, as establishing, in virtue of its infallibility as representing the universal church, the worship of images upon an impregnable foundation.

It is chiefly upon the ground of giving religious worship to saints and angels, and especially to the Virgin Mary, and to the images of Christ and the saints, that the charge of idolatry, commonly adduced by Protestants against the Church of Rome, is founded; and as this is a topic of some importance and of some intricacy, and as it has given rise to a great deal of discussion, it may be proper to give a brief account of it. And in doing so, we shall advert, first, to the historical department of the question, investigating what the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these

subjects is, and indicating some of the principal facts connected with its development and establishment; and afterwards give a brief exposition of some of the theological principles that bear upon the settlement of the controversy.

Sec. I.—*Historical Statement.*

In regard to the religious worship or *cultus* that should be paid to the saints and angels, and especially to the Virgin Mary, the fullest, the most formal and authoritative statement of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, is that of the Council of Trent. Even in the Council of Trent, the doctrine of the church upon this subject was not very distinctly defined or very clearly explained, although much prominence had been given to it by the Reformers in defending their separation from the Church of Rome. Their doctrines upon the subject of the worship both of saints and images were hastily slurred over in the last session of the council (the twenty-fifth), along with the equally delicate and difficult topics of purgatory and indulgences. With respect to this whole class of subjects, it is evident enough that the Council of Trent avoided giving any very exact or complete exposition of the church's doctrine, probably from a sort of lurking consciousness that it could not well stand a thorough investigation; and likewise in order to leave room for notions on these subjects being propagated, and practices being diffused, among the people, which, when challenged by their opponents, they might not be obliged to acknowledge and defend as the recognised doctrines of the church.

The substance of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these subjects of saints and images is thus stated in the profession of faith of Pope Pius IV., to which every Popish priest has sworn adherence,—that the saints reigning along with Christ are to be venerated and invoked; that they offer prayers to God for us; and that their relics are to be venerated; that the images of Christ and His mother, ever virgin, and those also of other saints, are to be kept, and that *due* (*debitum*) honour and veneration are to be given to them. There is not much more information as to what is the doctrine of the Church of Rome to be derived from the somewhat fuller statements upon these subjects in the decrees or in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, excepting only, in

general, that we ought to have recourse to their prayers, *help*, and *assistance*, but that they are not to be worshipped with the same honour as God, or with the species of worship which is admitted to be due to Him alone; and that images are not to be invoked as if anything were to be sought and obtained from them, or as if any divinity resided in them, the worship that is given to them being to be referred to the objects—*i.e.*, Christ or the saints—whom they represent. There is no other declaration of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon the subject of the worship of saints and angels; and what is vague, defective, or ambiguous here, must be supplied from the writings of her standard and approved authors; but on the subject of the veneration of images, we have, in addition, the actings and decrees of the second Council of Nice, held in 787, which is recognised by the Council of Trent, and by the Church of Rome as œcumenical, and therefore infallible; and is expressly referred to in the decree of the Council of Trent as the leading authority upon this point.

The history and character of the second Council of Nice* have become an important point in the discussion of this question; and there is certainly nothing in all we know about it that is in the least fitted to conciliate respect or deference to its decisions. Archbishop Tillotson has given a character of this council, which is fully confirmed by the undoubted facts of the case. It is this: "The second Council of Nice pretended their doctrine of image-worship to have descended to them by an uninterrupted tradition, and proved it most doughtily by texts of Scripture ridiculously wrested, by impertinent sayings out of obscure and counterfeit authors, and by fond (*i.e.*, foolish) and immodest stories (as is acknowledged by Pope Adrian VI.) of apparitions and women's dreams, etc., for which I refer the reader to the council itself; which is such a mess of fopperies, that if a general council of atheists had met together with a design to abuse religion by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually."† And again he says,‡ "The second Council of Nice,

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* Whitby and Comber in the seventh volume of Gibson's Preservative. Basnage and Forbes. Phillpott's Letters to Butler, and Supplemental Letter. Stillingfleet's Defence of Discourse on Idolatry. See on this whole subject, Chemnitii Examen Concil. Trident., P. iii. and iv.

† Tillotson, Rule of Faith, P. iv., sec. i., p. 308. Ed. 1676.

‡ Tillotson, Rule of Faith, P. ii., sec. iii., p. 95.

to establish their doctrine of image-worship, does so palpably abuse and wrest texts of Scripture, that I can hardly believe that any Papist in the world hath the forehead to own *that* for the true sense of those texts which is there given by those fathers." This council, then,—acting wholly under the influence of a very worthless woman, the Empress Irene (who, having murdered her husband, reigned during the minority of her son), and containing no men of eminence as theologians, no men who have secured for themselves, on any ground, an honourable reputation in the church, but which Papists are obliged by their principles to regard as enjoying the infallible guidance of the Holy Ghost,—decreed and established the worship of images in the professing church of Christ, and thus involved it in the guilt of idolatry. The substance of the decree of this council upon this subject was this: that προσκύνησις and ἀσπασμός were to be given to the σεπται και ἁγιαι εικονες of the cross of Christ, His mother, the angels, and all saints; but that this was not to be the same honour or worship that is given to God; that the honour paid to the image passed to the object which it represented; and that he who adores or worships the image,—προσκύνει,—worships or adores (the same word) him whose likeness it is.

Papists are now in general ashamed of the grounds or reasons which this council adopted and rested on as the foundation of their decree in favour of the worship of images,—of their silly and childish perversions of Scripture,—of their quotation, as authorities, of works ascribed to some of the fathers, now universally acknowledged to be forgeries,—and of the ridiculous and offensive stories about apparitions and miracles, which were all gravely adduced and founded on by the council, as proofs that images ought to be worshipped. In modern times, they commonly allege that the Church of Rome is bound only by the general final decision of the council, and is not obliged to approve of the grounds or reasons which the council adduced and assigned for it. This, however, is an unwarrantable evasion. The council is universally regarded by Romanists as œcumenical and infallible,—it being represented in this character by the Council of Trent. Its infallibility, of course, originated in the presiding guidance of the Holy Ghost; and if the Holy Spirit really presided in and directed the assembly, as Papists believe to have been the case, they surely must have been preserved from error in the grounds or reasons

they assigned for their doctrinal conclusions, as well as in the conclusions themselves, especially when they were professing to be giving the true sense and import of scriptural statements. It is in vain for Romanists to attempt to escape from the responsibility of anything which commended itself to the minds of a body of men whom, in their collective capacity, they regard as invested with infallibility, in virtue of the Holy Spirit presiding among them. We do not doubt that modern Romanists are heartily ashamed of many things set forth by the second Council of Nice, but there does not appear to be any way by which they can escape from the responsibility of all its deliverances, except by denying its infallibility; and the impossibility of their denying this, without renouncing some of their most important and fundamental principles, is just one of the many mill-stones which the claims and pretensions of the Church of Rome have fastened immovably around its neck. Besides, it is also deserving of remark, that in the Catechism of the Council of Trent,* reference is made, as to an authority upon this subject, not only to the seventh action or session of the second Council of Nice, which contains the general decree, but to several of the preceding actions, in which the grounds or reasons of their ultimate deliverance are set forth; and that we even find in it a general reference to the second Council of Nice, *passim*, which must in all fairness be regarded as sanctioning the general substance of its proceedings and deliverances, not merely its one final decision.

Romish writers encourage their readers in the belief that miracles have been often wrought by images, and that some particular images possess this power in a pre-eminent degree; but they are very unwilling, in modern times, to admit that their church is to be held responsible for this notion, or to be held committed to the reality of any particular miracles; and their unwillingness to face the ridiculous miracles recorded and founded upon by the second Council of Nice, makes them peculiarly anxious to escape from the necessity of defending *all* its deliverances. And yet it ought to be mentioned to the credit of that council, as being the only symptom of sense or decency observable in its proceedings, that it admitted that the images of *that* age were not much in the habit of working miracles, and that they

* Pars iii., cap. ii.

had to go back to former generations in order to collect proofs of this description. This feature in their conduct contrasts favourably with that of some Popish authorities in more modern times, who published at the time an official account, with the approbation of the Master of the Sacred Palace, of many miracles wrought by images in Italy in 1796 and 1797. This miraculous power was then exhibited chiefly by the images weeping and groaning, when the French armies under Napoleon entered Italy; and the official account, duly attested, was translated into English, and published in London, under the patronage of the Popish bishops, for the edification and comfort of the faithful. In our own day, the miracle by which images commonly confirm and edify the faithful, is winking.

Some important historical transactions succeeded the second Council of Nice, which, though we cannot enter into any details concerning them, are worthy of being noticed and remembered. Pope Adrian I., who may be said to have presided in this council by his legates, confirmed and sanctioned its proceedings and decrees, which were in entire accordance with his own views. Image-worship, however, as established by this council, met with great opposition in the Western Church, especially in France and Britain,—a plain proof that, at that time, neither the infallibility of councils, nor the supremacy of the Pope, was universally acknowledged. A book was prepared, in refutation of the arguments and conclusions of this council, in the name and by the authority of the Emperor Charlemagne, in the year 790, and transmitted by him to the Pope. This work is usually known under the name of Liber Carolinus, or Libri Carolini. It is divided into four books, and it openly condemns the whole proceedings of the Council of Nice, adducing no fewer than one hundred and twenty objections against them, declaring "that they contained folly, absurdity, malignity, senseless conjectures, and execrable errors derived from paganism; that the council perverted the Scriptures, and had not produced one relevant quotation from the Bible; that it distorted the extracts from the fathers, perverting the order, the sense, and the words; and had brought forward many puerilities from apocryphal writings." The work contains likewise an excellent and judicious proof from Scripture of the unlawfulness of employing images in the worship of God, or paying to them any external mark of religious honour and veneration. This work Charlemagne

sent to Pope Adrian, and his Holiness honoured it with a confutation by his own hand. This work of the Pope has come down to us; it is found in the Collection of Councils, and it may be most justly described in the terms which Charlemagne and Tillotson have applied to the proceedings of the council itself. It defends the whole proceedings of the council, and it exhibits quite as much of what is absurd and despicable. Some specimens of its arguments are given in Forbes' Instructiones Historico-Theologicæ.* Notwithstanding all this, the practice of image-worship was far from being generally approved of and adopted; and in 794, a council was held upon the subject at Frankfort, which had at least as good a title to be reckoned œcumenical as that of Nice, as it consisted of three hundred bishops from France, Germany, Spain, and Britain. This council condemned the proceedings and decisions of the second Council of Nice, and approved of the Liber Carolinus; and though it did not reject the giving some religious honour to the saints, it laid down general principles, which, if fairly followed out, would have as conclusively shut out the worship of saints as of images.

These facts are exceedingly perplexing to Romish controversialists, both on account of their bearing upon the particular subject of image-worship, and also of their bearing upon the general questions of the authority of councils and the supremacy of the Pope. Some of them have attempted to involve in doubt and obscurity the genuineness of the Liber Carolinus, and the Acts of the Council of Frankfort; but this is too desperate a course, and cannot be presented with anything like plausibility. It is accordingly rejected,—at least so far as the Council of Frankfort is concerned,—both by Baronius and Bellarmine. All that *they* attempted to establish upon the point is this: that the Council of Frankfort condemned the proceedings and decrees of the Council of Nice, under the influence of two errors or mistakes in matters of *fact;*—believing erroneously first, that the Council of Nice had decreed that images should receive the same honour and worship as God Himself; and, secondly, that the proceedings of that council had not been confirmed by the Pope. These allegations, however, are not only destitute of evidence, but can

* Forbesii Instructiones Hist. Theol., Lib. vii., c. xi. Basnage, Histoire de l'Eglise, tom. i., p. 571. Stillingfleet's Defence.

be positively and conclusively disproved. It can be easily shown that the Council of Frankfort understood correctly what the Council of Nice had decreed, and was fully aware that the Pope approved of its proceedings, and yet deliberately rejected and condemned it.*

There is probably no one of the subjects involved in the controversy between Protestants and Papists, with respect to which Papists are more accustomed to complain that Protestants misunderstand and misrepresent their views, than this one of the worship of saints and images, on which we commonly base the charge of idolatry against them. But the complaint has no foundation to rest upon. We really do not charge them with holding any doctrines upon this subject, but what we can prove that the Church of Rome has sanctioned; and we think we can prove that the admitted and undoubted doctrine of the Church of Rome affords sufficient grounds for the charges of polytheism and idolatry. We charge Romanists with no practices in these matters which we cannot prove to be sanctioned by their approved writers, by their authorized books of devotion, and by their own ordinary mode of speaking and acting. We know well enough what it is they hold upon this subject, so far as their church has defined her doctrine regarding it; we know what are the grounds on which she defends the doctrine she maintains; we think we can appreciate aright these grounds, and prove them to be utterly insufficient. We do not charge them with giving to saints and angels the same honour and worship which they profess to render to God; but we allege that they do give religious honour and worship to saints and angels, though they call it inferior, or subordinate in degree, to that which they render to God; and we think we can prove that Scripture not only does not warrant, but forbids, giving *any* religious honour or worship to saints or angels, and restricts it to God alone. We do not charge them with praying to saints and angels, and applying to them for spiritual blessings, *as if* they believed them to possess the attributes of Divinity; but we maintain that God claims to Himself alone those services, those expressions of reverence and confidence, which Romanists pay to saints and angels; that He claims them

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* Forbesii Instructiones Historico-Theologicæ, Lib. vii., c. xi. | Natalis Alexander, saec. viii., Dissert. vi.

on the ground of His infinite and incommunicable perfections, and that it is unwarrantable and unreasonable in itself, as well as inconsistent with Scripture, to render them to any but God; and on this ground we consider ourselves entitled to assert that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject involves practically and substantially polytheism,—or the introduction of many inferior beings to share in the honour and worship which should be reserved to the one true God alone.

There is, perhaps, greater difficulty in ascertaining, and therefore more probability of our mistaking, the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the subject of the honour and veneration that should be paid to the images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints. It is certain that the Church of Rome teaches that they ought to be kept in churches, as the Trent Catechism says,* "ut excolantur," and that, as a part of the worship of God, religious honour and veneration are to be paid to them; while she also teaches that there is no divinity in them, that they are not to be prayed *to*, that they are not to be asked or expected to bestow spiritual blessings, and that the veneration paid to them passes, or is transferred, to the object they represent. If the veneration paid to images passes, or is transferred, to the object they represent, it would seem as if it was not intended that any honour or veneration was due, and was to be paid directly, to the images themselves; and yet the Church of Rome expressly declares that it is right *eis debitum honorem et venerationem impertire, illis honorem et cultum adhibere*, as if they were themselves the direct and proper objects of this veneration and worship.† The authorized doctrine of the church upon this subject is thus involved in obscurity and ambiguity, if not inconsistency; and, indeed, there are considerable diversities of opinion on this point among her own most eminent writers. Ballarmine says ‡ that there are three different opinions held in the Church of Rome, in regard to the kind of worship—*de genere cultus*—to which images are entitled,—viz., first, that an image ought not in any way to be worshipped in itself, or on its own account, but only that the person represented by it should be worshipped in the presence of the image.

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* Part iii., c. ii. Catech. Trident., P. iii., c. ii.

† Concil. Trident., Sess. xxv., et Professio Fidei Pii IV.

‡ Bellar. Opera, 1619, tom. ii., 825.

This view manifestly comes short of what is taught upon the subject by the Councils of Nice and Trent, which plainly make the images themselves the direct and proper objects of honour and veneration. Secondly, that the same honour and veneration are to be given to the image as to the person it represents; that the same honour is to be given, for example, to an image of Christ as to Christ Himself; and so in like manner in regard to the Virgin and the saints. This view was held by St Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, and by other eminent Romish writers. This opinion likewise seems to be inconsistent with the decree of the second Council of Nice, erring by excess as the former does by defect; and the only way in which Bellarmine can explain the fact that many great doctors should have adopted it, is by supposing that they had never happened to see the acts of this œcumenical council, or the work of Pope Adrian in defence of it. Bellarmine himself, with the generality of Romish writers, adopts a view intermediate between these two extremes, and maintains—first, that images are to be worshipped of themselves, or on their own account, and properly—"imagines per se et proprie colendas esse;"—secondly, that they are not *per se* and *proprie* to be worshipped with the same honour as the objects they represent; but, thirdly, that they may receive the same worship as the objects they represent, "improprie et per accidens." And then he lays down this doctrine as a great general principle, intended to combine and harmonize these different views,—viz., that the worship which in itself and properly is due to images is a certain imperfect worship, that analogically and reductively belongs to that species or kind of worship which is due to the object represented by the image,* "Cultus qui per se, et proprie debetur imaginibus, est cultus quidam imperfectus, qui analogicè et reductivè pertinet ad speciem ejus cultus, qui debetur exemplari." This proposition, in which Bellarmine embodies the essence of the answer to the question as to the kind of worship to be given to images, is not very intelligible, and probably was not intended to be understood; but it exhibits the *ne plus ultra* of what learning and talent could do in explaining the true doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject; and the diversity of opinion subsisting among her most

* Bellarm. Opera, 1619, tom. ii., 834.

eminent writers, and the perplexity and confusion of her most distinguished champion in expounding this topic, present rather a singular contrast to the facility and confidence with which we often hear Romanists—who are probably as ignorant of the authorized decision of the Council of Nice as St Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor, was—propound the doctrine of their church on this point, and expose the alleged Protestant misrepresentation of it. We care little for these differences and perplexities, except as exhibiting the falsehood of the common boastings of Papists in their unity in clear and well-ascertained doctrines, and the special difficulties of their position on this question; for the ground we take upon this point is clear and definite, and strikes at the root of all the Romish doctrines and practices, whatever form or aspect they may assume,—viz., that it is unlawful, unwarranted by Scripture, and inconsistent with its statements, to introduce images into the worship of God, and to pay them *any* religious honour and veneration whatever.

Sec. II.—*Doctrinal Exposition.*

Having given some account of the real nature and import of the doctrine of the Church of Rome on the subject of the worship of saints and images, and of the leading historical circumstances connected with its origin and development; and especially of the second Council of Nice, where the doctrine of the worship of images was first formally established, and of the opposition which its decrees met with, I have now to advert briefly to some of the principal grounds on which the Romish doctrine on the subject has been assailed and defended.

The tendency to polytheism and idolatry,—*i.e.*, to the religious worship of a variety of beings, distinct from and inferior to the one supreme God, and the introduction of images or visible representations of the objects of worship into religious services,—is a very prominent feature in the character of fallen man, the result and manifestation of man's ungodliness, or his estrangement from the one only living and true God—his aversion to contemplate and realize one invisible Being, on whom he wholly depends for life, and breath, and all things. This tendency has been most fully exhibited in the whole history of our race. The world was soon overspread with polytheism and idolatry, and it still continues

to be so wherever the Christian revelation is unknown. This plainly indicates the tendency of fallen man in religious matters; and the full general results of this tendency, as exhibited in the leading features of heathenism, in every age and country, have been undoubtedly most offensive to God, most injurious to religion, and most degrading to mankind.

The leading features of heathen polytheism and idolatry stand out palpably to our observation, even upon the most cursory survey. No one can mistake them. They are manifestly these two, —viz., first, the giving of religious worship and homage to a number of inferior beings along with the one Supreme God; and, secondly, the use of images, or outward visible representations of these beings, supreme and inferior, in the religious worship and homage which are rendered to them. These two features of the common heathen idolatry, as thus generally stated and described, manifestly apply to the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome, with respect to saints and images; and her advocates have, in consequence, felt the necessity of pointing out clear distinctions between their case and that of the heathen, in order that they may escape from the charge of idolatry,—a crime so frequently and so severely denounced in Scripture. They are the more anxious to effect this, because it is undeniable that the fathers, to whom they are so much in the habit of referring as authorities, are accustomed, when they are exposing the idolatry of their heathen adversaries, to make statements which, as they stand, decidedly condemn as irrational and anti-scriptural what is now taught and practised in the Church of Rome. The distinctions which they attempt to set up are chiefly these: First, that the heathen give to these inferior beings the same worship and homage which they render to the Supreme Being—that they worship them all equally as gods; whereas they (the Romanists) give to saints and angels only an inferior or subordinate worship or homage, and reserve to God a higher kind or species of worship that ought to be rendered to no creature; and, secondly, that the heathen worshipped the images of false gods,—*i.e.*, of beings who had no real existence, or were not entitled to any religious respect,—or worshipped them in the belief that the images themselves were gods, or that some divinity resided in them, which could hear prayer and confer blessings; whereas they (the Romanists) worship or venerate only the images of Christ, His

mother, and the saints now reigning in heaven,—do not regard these images as possessed of any power of hearing prayers or conferring blessings, and merely employ them as aids or auxiliaries in rendering aright the worship and homage due to those whom they represent,—honouring and venerating the images on their account.

In regard to these allegations of the Romanists, we maintain, —first, that the representations here given of heathenism are not true in fact, and that the alleged distinctions between heathenism and Romanism in these matters cannot be established by satisfactory evidence; and, secondly, that these distinctions are insufficient to shield the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome from the denunciations of heathen polytheism and idolatry contained in the sacred Scriptures and the writings of the fathers. There is good ground to believe, that the more intelligent and reflecting among the heathen, both in ancient and in modern times, perceived and admitted a distinction between the Supreme God and the inferior deities whom they worshipped, and that they paid *some* regard to this distinction in the kind or degree of worship which they rendered to them; that they had in their minds a distinction between the highest worship and homage due only to the one Supreme God, and an inferior worship or homage rendered to many other beings,—a distinction substantially the same as that which Papists employ in their own defence, though not so fully enunciated or so carefully explained. And with regard to images, there is equally good ground to believe that the more intelligent and reflecting heathens did not ascribe to them any divinity, or expect from them blessings, any more than the Church of Rome does, and would say little or nothing more about the honour and veneration due to them than the Council of Trent has done. With respect to the allegation that the heathen gave religious worship to beings who had never existed, and to their images, this, in so far as concerns the conviction and belief of the worshippers, is not true, for they *believed* that the beings whom they worshipped had existed, and did then exist; and so far as concerns the actual reality or matter of fact, the heathens were in no worse condition in this respect than the Romanists are: for it has been proved by satisfactory evidence, that some persons have been canonized by Popes,—and are in consequence entitled to be invoked and worshipped by all Papists,—who never existed; and that others have been admitted into the calendar of saints,

and have thus become legitimate objects of Popish worship, who, when tried by the scriptural standard, can be shown to be no more entitled to respect and veneration of any sort than were the inferior deities of ancient Greece and Rome. In short, the condition of heathens, in the more civilised countries, was, in this respect, substantially the same with that of the subjects of the Romish Church. The more intelligent and reflecting heathens no more confounded the crowd of inferior or subordinate objects of religious worship with the one Supreme God, and no more identified images with living and intelligent objects of veneration, than the defenders of Popery now do; and if the general state of sentiment and practice among the common mass of ignorant heathens differed from this, and corresponded more fully with the representations which Romish writers usually give of it, this is nothing more than can be easily paralleled in the Church of Rome; for there can be no reasonable doubt that even at the present day, in countries where Romanism has full and unbroken sway, and where, in consequence, ignorance generally obtains, the great mass of the people exhibit in their prevailing sentiments and practices in regard to saints and images just as gross and palpable polytheism and idolatry as the heathen do. Papists, then, are unable to establish any material or definite distinction between their doctrines and practices with respect to saints and images, and the unquestionable polytheism and idolatry of the heathen.

It is particularly important to notice that the Scripture gives no countenance or support to these distinctions; or—to state the matter in the precise form in which it bears most directly upon the point we are now considering—the Scripture, in condemning polytheism and idolatry, does not base its condemnation of them upon those alleged features of heathen worship on which Papists base the distinctions they try to establish between their own views and practices, and those of the heathen, but on more general and comprehensive grounds equally applicable to both. The Scripture condemns all polytheism,—the worship of other gods,—not upon the ground that the worship or homage rendered to them was the same as, or equal to, that which was, and should be, rendered to the one Supreme God; but on the ground that all religious worship should be rendered only to the one Supreme God, and that no religious worship should be rendered to any other being. It con-

demns all idolatry or image-worship, not merely upon the ground that those whose images were honoured and venerated were false gods, and were not themselves entitled to religious worship; but on the ground that it is irrational, injurious, and unlawful to introduce images or external visible representations into the worship of the invisible God. There is good reason to believe that the Israelites intended to pay religious worship and homage to Jehovah, the one true God, by the golden calf which Aaron made at their instigation, and that Jeroboam likewise intended to worship the true God, the God of Israel, by the images or visible representations which he set up; and yet these acts are not the less on that account condemned in Scripture as idolatry.

It has also been satisfactorily proved, that the substance of what has now been stated in regard to the scriptural mode of representing and dealing with polytheism and idolatry, holds good likewise of the general course of statement and argument adopted by the fathers in their discussions with the heathen adversaries of Christianity.

This obvious and striking resemblance between Romanism and the unquestionable polytheism and idolatry of heathenism, surely affords at least a very strong presumption that the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, in regard to saints and images, are opposed to the word of God, and injurious to true religion, and imposes upon its defenders an obligation to produce from Scripture very clear and conclusive evidence in support of their views and conduct in this matter. The main question, however, upon this subject, is not so much whether the worship of saints and images, as sanctioned and practised in the Church of Rome, be substantially identical with those of the heathens, nor even whether the terms polytheism and idolatry be strictly and properly applicable to them, though both these questions should be answered in the affirmative; but whether the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome upon this subject be sanctioned by Scripture, or be, on the contrary, anti-scriptural and unlawful. If it can be proved that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject is opposed to Scripture, and, consequently, that the practice founded upon it is unlawful or forbidden by God,—this, of course, is a sufficient reason why we should on this ground express our decided condemnation of that church; why we should take care that we shall not partake in her sin, and why we should feel constrained

to exert ourselves in the use of all scriptural means to rescue our fellow-men from her yoke, by labouring to convince them that Popish priests are blind leaders of the blind; and that from following *their* guidance, nothing else can be expected than that, along with their leaders, they should fall into the ditch of guilt and misery.

We shall not dwell upon the consideration, though it is both true and important, that unless it can be positively proved from Scripture that some religious worship is due to saints, and that some honour and veneration ought to be paid to images, this is enough to condemn them, inasmuch as Scripture sanctions the general principle, that it is unwarrantable to introduce into the worship of God anything which God Himself has not positively sanctioned; but we shall proceed to advert briefly to the more direct and positive grounds by which it can be proved that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these subjects is *opposed* to Scripture; and that the practice which she bases upon it is forbidden by God, and is therefore sinful. There can be no doubt that one object of the revelation which God has given to us was to make known to us how He ought to be worshipped,—what the religious services are which He requires of us, and the due performance of which might bear favourably upon our relation to Him, and our eternal welfare. Authoritative information upon this subject was greatly needed, in consequence of the powerful tendency of fallen man to polytheism and idolatry, as evinced by the general condition of the human race before any written revelation was given them, and by the general condition of mankind still, wherever this written revelation is unknown. The great leading principles which are plainly taught upon this subject in the whole revelation which God has given us, both in the Old Testament and the New, are these: That there is but one God, and no other; one Being who alone is our Creator, our Preserver, and our Benefactor; one Being who alone is qualified to govern, and does govern, the world,—on whom alone we depend for everything we enjoy and expect to attain to; that the worship and homage which we should render to Him, should be regulated by the perfections which He possesses, and by the relation in which we stand to Him; that He alone is possessed of such perfections, and stands in such a relation to us, as to make Him a proper object of religious worship; that His glory He will not give to

another, and that He claims religious worship as due to Himself alone, to the exclusion of all other beings; and that He condemns the introduction of images or outward sensible representations of Himself, or of any other beings, into the religious service which He requires of His creatures. This statement embodies the sum and substance of what is manifestly the natural and obvious meaning of many statements contained in Scripture, with which all must be familiar, and which we need not quote. And if the principles now stated are indeed taught in Scripture, they manifestly exclude or prohibit the paying *any* religious worship or homage to saints or angels, or any creatures whatever, and the introduction of images or visible representations for *any* purpose into the professed worship of God.

Romanists, of course, are bound, in order to defend the doctrine of their church in regard to the worship of saints and images, to show that these principles are not taught in Scripture; or, if they admit, what they cannot well dispute, that they are laid down there as general truths or doctrines, at least to prove that Scripture warrants us to understand them with some limitations or modifications, and does not require us to hold them in all their extent and absoluteness; and even if they could establish this general position, it would still further be necessary for them to prove that Scripture sanctions just *such* limitations and modifications of these general principles as will leave room for their precise doctrines in regard to saints and images. It would be sufficient, indeed, and would accomplish their whole object *at once*, if they could produce direct and specific proof of what they teach upon these subjects. If they could do this,—*i.e.*, if they could produce satisfactory proof from Scripture that saints deceased are entitled to some religious worship and homage; that they pray for us, and that we ought to pray to them; that they hear or know our prayers addressed to them, and in answer to these prayers, contribute in some way to procure for us the blessings we need; and that images ought to be used in the worship of God, and should receive some religious honour and veneration;—if they could conclusively prove *all this*, directly by scriptural evidence, then we would be bound to admit that the great general scriptural principles, formerly laid down, are to be understood with such limitations and modifications as to leave room for those Romish doctrines which seem so plainly to run counter to their natural and obvious import; but they can

scarcely be said to *attempt* producing any direct and specific evidence from Scripture in support of their doctrine; for any attempts of this kind which they make, are so despicable as to be unworthy of notice; while, on the other side, we can adduce from Scripture, —in addition to the general principles formerly stated, and in proof that they are to be understood in their natural obvious meaning,— the facts that angels and the most eminent saints are recorded to have refused the ordinary outward marks of religious worship when offered to them, and to have refused them on the ground that God alone was to be worshipped; and that *all* that we find in Scripture about images, or outward visible representations in connection with the worship of God, is in a tone of decided condemnation.

The natural obvious meaning of the second commandment in the Decalogue is, that God there, in regulating the mode in which He is to be worshipped, after having in the first commandment claimed religious worship to Himself as the only proper object of it, forbids the making of any likeness of any object, *with the view of introducing this likeness into religious worship*, or paying to it any of the ordinary external marks of religious honour and veneration. And so sensible are Romanists that this is the natural and obvious meaning of the second commandment, that they have been accustomed to exclude it wholly, while professing to quote the Decalogue, from the catechisms commonly used in the instruction of their people. Independently of the great general principles taught in Scripture concerning the worship of God, we find there the giving any religious worship to saints and angels condemned by very plain implication, and the introduction of images into the worship of God, and the rendering to them the external marks of honour and veneration, condemned explicitly; and we have nothing of a specific kind in support of the Romish doctrine and practice, that is possessed of any weight or deserving of serious consideration. On all these grounds, we consider ourselves entitled to conclude that the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon these subjects is opposed to Scripture, and that the practice which she founds upon it is forbidden by the law of God.

Papists have, indeed, invented a variety of distinctions to evade the force of the general principles and the specific statements of Scripture, which seem to oppose their doctrines and practices in regard to saints and images; but they are wholly insufficient to

serve the purpose for which they are adduced. They all labour under one radical and fatal defect,—viz., that they have themselves no support from Scripture; and that, therefore, even though they were in themselves true and real, they could not be legitimately employed to explain away, or to limit, or modify a clear scriptural principle or a plain scriptural precept. If the general principles of Scripture are to be limited or modified,—if the specific precepts of Scripture as they stand are to be set aside,—we must find the warrant for doing so in Scripture itself; we must produce materials from Scripture to establish in general the lawfulness and necessity of departing from the natural obvious meaning of the statements founded on, and also, moreover, to sanction the specific deviations from their ordinary meaning, which are contended for, on the other side. And when these considerations are kept in view, it becomes obvious that Papists have not been able to produce any sufficient warrant for limiting or modifying the great scriptural principle that the one Supreme God is the only proper object of religious worship; or for setting aside the scriptural prohibition of the introduction of images into religious worship, and giving to them the outward marks of religious honour and veneration. Papists are accustomed to distinguish between a *supreme* religious worship which is due only to God, and which they call *latria*, and an *inferior* religious worship which is due to saints and angels, and which they call *doulia;* also between a *direct* worship, supreme or subordinate, which is due to God, to saints and angels, according to their rank, and a *relative* worship which is to be paid to images from a regard to the persons whom they represent. But these distinctions, though real in themselves,—*i.e.*, though easily conceivable,—are not suggested to us by Scripture, or set before us there. They are the mere productions of men's natural power of abstracting and distinguishing; and therefore they can be of no avail in affording a warrant, and still less in imposing an obligation, to modify a scriptural principle, or to set aside a scriptural precept. If we could prove directly and positively from Scripture, that saints were entitled to an inferior religious worship, and that images ought to receive a relative honour and veneration, *then* we might legitimately employ these distinctions in showing how these positions, thus proved, might be reconciled with the other scriptural principles and precepts that seemed to be opposed to them. But in the entire

absence of all scriptural support for these distinctions, and in the entire want of any scriptural proof of the lawfulness and obligation of the things themselves, which these distinctions are designed to explain and defend,—this can afford no ground whatever for modifying or setting aside any scriptural statement, or for vindicating the doctrine and practices of the Church of Rome in regard to saints and images from the condemnation which the word of God pronounces upon them.

The only thing like a *positive* argument which Papists have been able to devise in favour of the worship which they pay to saints and angels, is a statement to this effect,—that all beings ought to be honoured according to their true qualities and their real positions,—that there is a civil honour or worship that is due to men according to their position and our relation to them,—that there is a supreme religious worship that is due only to God,—and that there is something intermediate between these two—viz., an inferior religious worship of which saints and angels are the appropriate objects, and to which they are in consequence entitled. Now, not to dwell upon the utter inadequacy of a vague generality of this sort, to set aside a scriptural principle, and to impose a religious obligation, or upon the consideration that God alone is the source and fountain of honour, and is alone entitled to determine in what way and to what extent other beings are to be honoured, —and that He has, to say the least, given us no indication of His will that deceased saints and angels should be to us the objects of *any* services, or should receive from us *any* outward marks of honour,—we have just to observe, in answer to this argument, that there is no medium between civil worship and religious worship, *and* that Scripture restricts religious worship to God alone. The only proper foundation of religious worship is the possession of divine perfection, and the power of conferring upon us spiritual blessing and ensuring our eternal welfare. These statements certainly do not apply to saints and angels ; and, therefore, whatever sentiments or feelings we may cherish towards them, there is no ground in right reason why we should pay them any religious worship. An inferior religious worship is an absurdity, almost a contradiction ; and, accordingly, experience abundantly proves that, however anxious Papists may be in their speculations and explanations to draw the line of demarcation between the supreme religious worship due only to God, and the inferior religious wor-

ship due to saints and angels, this line ordinarily and in practice almost wholly disappears. The Council of Trent expressly sanctions praying to saints either vocally or *mentally*, which is virtually to ascribe to them a power which God claims as peculiarly His own,—that, viz., of understanding men's thoughts, of searching the heart. The invocation of saints implies that everywhere, or in all places, they can and do hear or know the prayers which are addressed to them; and this is virtually to ascribe to them the divine attributes of omnipresence and omniscience: for the ridiculous conjectures which Papists have invented to explain how it is that the saints, without the possession of these attributes, hear or know the prayers addressed to them, are evidently mere evasions, which they themselves do not truly realize, and which exert no practical influence upon their own sentiments and impressions concerning this matter. They profess commonly that they only pray to the saints to pray to God on their behalf; but the Council of Trent directs men to have recourse to the help and assistance as well as the prayers of the saints,—as if the saints could really confer upon them or afford them certain and efficacious assistance in procuring the blessings which they need in order to their eternal happiness. Their authorized books of devotion sanction the practice of asking God to give them spiritual blessings from a regard to the merits of the saints, which practically implies that the saints are considered as occupying the same relation to God as that which is held by His own eternal Son; and in their ordinary authorized addresses to the Virgin Mary, they are accustomed to ask directly of her the highest spiritual blessings, as if they believed that she had the absolute power of dispensing them,*—thus virtually abandoning in practice what they profess to hold in theory, throwing aside the distinction between a supreme and an inferior religious worship, and practically honouring and worshipping a mere creature as if she were possessed of the perfections of the one eternal and infinite Jehovah, and were really able to determine men's everlasting destinies.

A very favourite allegation of the Romanists, in support of their doctrine and practice with respect to the worship of saints, is, that since we are authorized and encouraged to ask saints upon

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* Stillingfleet, Doctrines and Practices of the Church of Rome; with Introduction and Notes by Dr Cunningham, p. 46, 1st ed.

earth to pray to God for us, or on our behalf, there can be no impropriety in our asking the glorified saints reigning with Christ in heaven to pray for us; and that if we have ground for expecting benefit from the one practice, we have as good, or rather better, ground for expecting benefit from the other. This consideration usually occupies a very prominent place in the reasonings of Papists upon this subject; and, indeed, Bellarmine asserts* that Protestants have never been able to answer it. But it is easy to show that it has no real weight or relevancy in establishing their views. First, this argument, even if admitted to be sound and valid, applies only to one portion of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject,—that which inculcates that we should invocate the saints, or ask them to pray for us. It gives not even the appearance of support to their fundamental doctrine, —that which is the basis and ground of all the rest,—viz., that the saints are entitled to a subordinate religious worship, as including both a certain state of mind and feeling to be cherished in regard to them, and certain outward marks of religious reverence to be paid to them. It gives *no appearance* of support to the doctrine laid down by the Council of Trent, that we ought to have recourse to their help and assistance, as well as to their prayers; which plainly implies, that they can and do contribute to procuring blessings for us in other ways—though these are prudently not specified—than by their prayers. It gives no appearance of support to the practice sanctioned by their authorized books of devotion, of asking God to give us spiritual blessings for the sake of the *merits* of the saints; and even in regard to the simple invocation of saints, or asking them to pray to God for us, —the only portion of the Romish doctrine to which the argument has any *appearance* of applying,—it is utterly destitute of all real weight. It is manifestly no proof of the conclusion, in support of which it is adduced,—viz., that *we ought* to pray to saints deceased to pray for us. There is evidently no logical connection between the premises and the conclusion. There is no real argument in the position, that because we ought to ask saints on earth to pray for us, therefore we ought to ask saints in heaven—in circumstances wholly different, both in themselves and in relation to us—to pray for us. The one certainly affords no real positive

* Tom. ii., p. 742.

argument in favour of the other. It might afford a certain slight presumption in favour of it, if there were nothing positive and substantial to be adduced on the other side. It may afford, in the way of analogy, an answer to *some* of the objections which might be adduced against invocating deceased saints; but it contains no direct positive argument in support of it, and it leaves all our main objections against it wholly untouched.

These considerations are quite sufficient to dispose of this argument, of which Papists make so much use in defending the invocation of saints; but it is easy to show, in addition to all this, that there are most important differences between the two cases, which render the one wholly useless as an argument, or even a presumption, in support of the other. We cannot dwell upon these differences, but will merely state some of them, without entering into any illustration. First, there is clear and unquestionable Scripture authority for the one practice; whereas there is not a vestige of scriptural evidence, bearing directly and immediately, in support of the other. Secondly, the asking and obtaining the prayers of saints or holy men upon earth is a mutual exercise of the general duty of love and kindness, which all men reciprocally owe to each other; whereas the invocation of deceased saints, or the praying to them to pray for us, is, upon Popish principles, a part and a manifestation of a certain religious worship, homage, or reverence, which is supposed to be due to them, but which is inconsistent with the scriptural principle that restricts religious worship to God alone, on the ground of perfections which He alone possesses, and of relations which He alone holds with respect to us. Thirdly, the asking the prayers of our fellow-men, to whom we have access, can be shown to be rational in all its features and circumstances,—*i.e.*, to be warranted and sanctioned by the known realities of the case, by everything in the known condition and relations of the two parties,—whereas there *are* things about the invocation of saints which have no rational foundation in the known realities of the case, in the known powers and capacities of saints in heaven, and in the relation in which we stand to them. Fourthly, there is no danger of abuse or mischief in the practice of asking the prayers of our fellow-men upon earth; whereas the invocation of saints in heaven may be shown to have a strong and manifest tendency to be perverted for superstitious and polytheistic purposes, even if it were conceded that it

did not necessarily, and in itself, involve directly anything superstitious or polytheistic.

The Romanists are accustomed to dwell much upon the practical utility of images in religious worship, in aiding the mental operations, and guiding and elevating the feelings, especially of ignorant and uncultivated men, in their religious exercises; but the conclusive answer to all they allege upon this point is to be found in the following considerations, which we can merely state without illustrating them. First, the whole history of the world fully proves that the tendency to introduce images, or visible representations of the object of worship, into religious services, is one of the most strongly marked features in the character of fallen and depraved man; and that this tendency, in its manifested results, has ever exerted a most injurious influence upon the interests of religion and morality: and, secondly, that God—who alone is entitled to regulate how He is to be worshipped, and who best knows what is in man, and what is best fitted to form man to the right worship and the full enjoyment of his Creator—has given a positive law, expressly prohibiting the making of images or visible representations of any objects, with the view of employing them in religious worship, and the rendering to them the outward marks of religious honour and veneration; while a great deal may be derived from the history and condition of the Church of Rome to establish the wisdom of this explicit and unqualified prohibition, in its bearing upon man's highest interests—his spiritual welfare.

We might have exhibited the current views and practices of Papists on the subject of the worship of saints and images, and have given practical illustrations of the undoubted polytheism and idolatry that commonly obtains in Popish countries, especially in regard to what is sometimes called Mariolatry, or the worship of the mother of our Lord, who is practically, to the great mass of Papists, the only deity, the only real object of religious worship. It is right to know something of the current views and practices of Papists upon these subjects, to have just impressions of the real tendencies and results of Popery, wherever its influences are fully developed, and to cherish due compassion for its unhappy victims. But we have thought it better, upon the whole, to direct attention to the unquestionably authorized doctrines to which the Church of Rome is pledged, which cannot be denied or explained

away, and which cannot be set aside as the misrepresentations of adversaries, or the errors and excesses of injudicious friends, or as mere abuses which may be occasionally exhibited in connection with any system. We have explained the undoubted doctrines of the Church of Rome from her acknowledged standard books, and as they are stated and defended by her most skilful champions. We have charged them with nothing which they can deny honestly, and have endeavoured to show that these acknowledged doctrines, with all the care and caution with which they can be stated, and with all the explanations and distinctions by which they can be defended, are not only unsupported by Scripture, but opposed to its statements; and that the practice that is based upon them is forbidden by God, and must be displeasing and offensive to Him, —fitted not to procure His favour, but to call forth His indignation; that it is a mode of acting which He will not only not receive as acceptable service rendered to Him, but which He will visit with tokens of His displeasure. This mode of discussing the subject not only avoids misunderstanding and misrepresenting the authorized doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome on these subjects, but prevents attempts to explain away or to gloss over the real doctrines and practices of that church; and, especially, it serves to prove, that although the authorized doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome on these points may not go quite so far as is sometimes supposed, both by ignorant Protestants and by ignorant Papists, yet that that church is, beyond all question, pledged to doctrines which are opposed to the teaching of Scripture, and to practices which are condemned by the word of God, —that there is a clear course of conclusive scriptural argument which bears full and direct against her doctrines and practices, however cautiously and carefully stated, and however skilfully and dexterously defended.

Protestants who are not much versant in these matters, who have no very precise notions of what it is they mean to charge against the Church of Rome upon this subject, who have little more than a vague idea that she teaches and practises something very bad on the subject of worshipping saints and images, are apt to be staggered at the extent to which Papists disclaim the doctrines and practices sometimes imputed to them; and if they should be convinced that they have ignorantly imputed to them more error than the Church of Rome can be proved to have

formally sanctioned, they are then apt to take these Popish disclamations at a great deal more than their real worth,—to take them as abjurations of almost, if not altogether, everything that is erroneous and objectionable, and on this ground virtually to abandon their whole charge against the Church of Rome on this point. As some process of this sort is not unfrequently going on amongst us, we have thought it best to confine attention in a great measure to a statement of the doctrines and practices to which the Church of Rome, as such, is pledged, without introducing anything that might be objected to, and set aside as a misrepresentation, an exaggeration, an abuse, or a mere private opinion; and to show how much there is, even in the undoubted and universally admitted doctrines of the Church of Rome, that is opposed to the teaching of the word of God, and fitted to corrupt the purity and to diminish the efficacy of true religion. But while we have confined ourselves in a great measure to this department of the subject, we think it important to state two facts which are necessary for the full exposition of this subject, and which can be established by conclusive proof,—viz., first, that the ordinary devotional and practical works, which are commonly in the hands of Romanists, often ascribe more honour and veneration to saints and images, and especially to the Virgin Mary and *her* images, than the standard books of the church and the statements of her controversial writers sanction, and that thus Papists incur the guilt of trying to diffuse among the people notions and practices which they know to be unauthorized, and which they are conscious they cannot defend when challenged; and, secondly, that the notions and practices prevalent among the people, in regard to the worship due to saints and images, in countries where Popery has the ascendancy, go far beyond what any intelligent Papist would sanction or defend; while yet no real or vigorous effort is made by the priesthood to discountenance these notions and practices,—a fact strikingly illustrative of the general policy of the Popish system, and of the general tendency and natural results of Popish doctrines upon this particular subject, viewed in connection with the natural tendencies of fallen man. The truth is, that, with the doctrines openly avowed and taught by the Church of Rome upon this subject, idolatry of the grossest and most offensive kind,—idolatry as gross and offensive as that which

generally obtains among the heathen,—can be avoided only by means of explanations and distinctions, which the body of the people do not readily understand and apply, and in which no pains are taken to instruct them, except in countries where they come into contact with Protestants.

There is an allegation often made by Romanists, not so much to disprove the charge of idolatry, which Protestants commonly base upon the worship of saints and angels, but rather to deter us from adducing and urging it. It is this—that it is very improbable that the great body of the church should, for so long a period, have fallen into, and continued in, so heinous a crime as idolatry; and that if this charge is well founded, it must imply that all Romanists must be consigned to everlasting misery as idolaters. The examination of the first part of this allegation would lead into an investigation of the whole of those general grounds by which Papists usually attempt to evade a fair discussion of their particular doctrines, according to the standard of Scripture,—*i.e.*, the claims which they put forth on behalf of their church, as the only true church, to indefectibility and preservation from all error. On these we cannot enter; but we would only remark that we do not admit that there is anything in Scripture to establish the falsehood, or even the improbability, of what we allege to have taken place in this matter, and that there is much in Scripture fitted to lead us to expect just such an apostasy as we say the Church of Rome exhibits.

With respect to the inference they deduce from the charge of idolatry—that all Romanists must endure the wrath of God as idolaters—we deny that this inference is well founded. Their allegation upon this point is not very consistent with another often made, that men may be faithful subjects of the Church of Rome, and yet never worship saints or images: for there is thus an opening left by which the charge against the church may be retained, while yet some of her subjects may escape the guilt in which the church, as such, is involved. And this, indeed, we hold to be in substance true, though not upon the Romish ground. We believe that there have always been, and still are, in the Church of Rome, men who, in heart, and in the sight of God, were not idolaters,—*i.e.*, who were really and in the main worshipping the one only, living, and true God in sincerity and in truth, and resting on the one foundation which has been laid in Zion. It is not easy for men

to determine how far their fellow-men,—subjected, it may be, to great disadvantages as to the means of knowing God's will, and involved in great ignorance and darkness,—may yet have had a real saving knowledge of God and divine things introduced into their minds, and made instrumental by the Holy Spirit in renovating and sanctifying them. We cannot doubt that men possessed of very different degrees of knowledge of divine things, and even professing no inconsiderable amount of error, have, while on earth, been prepared for the enjoyment of heaven. Even during the darkness of the middle ages, when the influence of Popery, in diffusing its corruptions of God's worship and truth, was greatest, and when the access to opportunities of gaining sounder knowledge was least, we meet with men who gave unequivocal evidence of having been born again through the belief of the truth. And we doubt not that the Church of Rome has always contained some such men,—men who were better than their professed principles—men who had not fully yielded to the natural tendency and the full practical influence of the errors which they professed to hold—men whose character was formed, and whose conduct was regulated, much more by the truth which they embraced than by the error which they conjoined with it—men who were so deeply impressed with a sense of the glory of God and the all-sufficiency of Christ, as that the errors they held upon the honour due to saints and images exerted but a feeble influence upon the general current of their thoughts and feelings.

All this is true, as a matter of fact established by experience, and should not be overlooked. But it is not on this account the less true, that all error in regard to the worship of God and the way of salvation is sinful and dangerous; that the word of God, and not the actual character of men, is the only standard by which we ought to judge of truth and falsehood, right and wrong; that the Church of Rome has grievously corrupted the truth of God in regard to the way in which He ought to be worshipped,—so much so, that a practice in this matter, accordant with her teaching, fully followed out and fairly applied, involves the sins of polytheism and idolatry,—*i.e.*, the sins of giving to other beings, mere creatures, the honour and reverence which are due only to Him, and of worshipping Him in a way which He has expressly forbidden; and that this is fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon all who submit to her authority and follow her guid-

ance. The greatest sin which a professing church, as such, can commit, is to hold forth and to inculcate erroneous views in regard to the worship of God and the way of salvation. This guilt most fully attaches to the Church of Rome; and the errors which she inculcates upon these subjects are so great, that we can scarcely conceive that any man who *fully* submits to her teaching, and allows it to exert its full and appropriate practical influence upon his heart and character, can be fairly regarded as worshipping God in truth, or as resting upon Christ for salvation; while we admit that there are men in her communion who, though professing to adopt her creed, and to submit to her authority, have not fully imbibed her peculiar principles, and have escaped to a large extent from their injurious influence. The substance of the matter is this. The Church of Rome systematically mingles a large portion of poison with the wholesome food which she administers, and thus proves that she is under the influence of him who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning; and the natural tendency and ordinary result of this is to ruin men's souls, while some constitutions, by the grace of God, shake off the deleterious influence, and escape, though not without much damage, from mortal injury.

The guilt of idolatry—of giving any religious honour or worship to saints and images—is, under the Christian dispensation, peculiarly aggravated. We have now spread out before us the whole history of our race, plainly declaring how strong and, humanly speaking, irresistible is the tendency of fallen man to polytheism and idolatry, and how injurious this tendency is, in its results, to religion and morality. We have the fullest manifestation of God's displeasure against anything like polytheism and idolatry, exhibited not only in the particular statements and express provisions of His word, but in the whole history of His dealings with men, especially in His selection of a peculiar people, and in the whole arrangements of the Mosaic economy, which were expressly designed to counteract this natural tendency of men, and to guard His chosen people against it. We have in Christianity the fullest discovery of the perfections of God, and of the relation in which we stand to Him, and we have an external ritual established, characterized by the utmost spirituality and simplicity; and all this enforces the irrationality, the unlawfulness, and the incongruity of any approach to a polytheistic or idolatrous

worship. Finally, we have manifested and offered to us in the Christian system one all-sufficient Mediator between God and man, who is the only image of the invisible God—who has removed every obstacle to our drawing near to God, and asking and obtaining His favour—who has opened up for us a new and living way of access into God's presence, and who has made full provision for the everlasting salvation of all who trust in Him. We find in Him everything we can need: a most full, palpable, and impressive revelation of the Father; infinite merits to procure and deserve for us the divine favour, and all spiritual blessings; human love and sympathy for us (for He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh) far beyond whatever dwelt in any other human heart; the fullest encouragement to have recourse at all times directly to His prayers, help, and assistance, with the assurance that He hears our prayers, that He knows our wants, that He ever liveth to make intercession for us, that Him the Father heareth always, and that He is both able and willing to procure for His people whatever they need. This surely should afford us perfect satisfaction amid our anxieties about our spiritual welfare; and all the more because we know at the same time, that there is no danger that any honour or reverence we pay to Him, any confidence we repose in Him, any love or gratitude we yield to Him, *can* ever exceed what is rightfully due to Him, since, while He is a partaker of flesh and blood like ourselves, He is likewise God over all, blessed for evermore.

CHAPTER XIII.

CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITIES.

In surveying the history of the church, we see the supreme civil powers, after the age of Constantine, professing to feel an obligation to exert their civil authority for the welfare of the church and the good of religion, and interfering to a large extent in religious, theological, and ecclesiastical matters, professedly in the discharge of this obligation. We see enough to prove that the church, in all its interests, was very materially affected, for better or worse, by this interference of the civil powers. We see disputes between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities about their respective functions and obligations—their powers and prerogatives. We see these disputes coming to a great crisis or era, in the contentions between the Emperor Henry IV. and Pope Gregory VII., when the ecclesiastical power put forth a claim to entire and absolute supremacy over the civil. And this contest between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities,—or *inter imperium et sacerdotium*, as it used to be called,—has continued in every age, down to the present day. It has excited no small interest in our own day; and it is likely not only to continue to be discussed as a question of argument, but to produce important practical results. It may, therefore, be proper briefly to advert to it. The whole topics which have been, or which need to be, discussed with reference to this subject, may be comprehended under these questions: What relation ought to subsist between the State and the Church, or the civil and ecclesiastical powers? and, What are the principles that ought to regulate this relation?

Sec. I.—*Voluntaryism.*

The discussion of these questions has given rise to four systems of opinion; and we shall begin with the newest or most

modern, because it is also, in some respects, the simplest and most sweeping. It is what has assumed to itself, though inaccurately and unwarrantably, the name of the Voluntary system,—a name derived from a partial representation of one of the views to which the principle leads, and not in any respect fairly descriptive of the principle itself. It amounts in substance to this,—that the only relation that ought to subsist between the State and the Church—between civil government and religion—is that of entire separation; or, in other words, its advocates maintain that nations, as such, and civil rulers in their official capacity, not only are not bound, but are not at liberty, to interfere in any religious matters, or to seek to promote the welfare of the church of Christ, as such. This theory, if true, supersedes the necessity of all further inquiry into the principles that ought to regulate the relation between Church and State; for it really implies, that no connection should subsist, or can lawfully subsist, between them. All the other answers which have been given to the question propounded, assume the falsehood of this theory, and are based upon an assertion of the opposite principle,—viz., that nations, as such, and civil rulers in their official capacity, are entitled and bound to aim at the promotion of the interests of true religion, and the welfare of the church of Christ; that there are things which they can lawfully do, which are fitted to promote these objects; and that thus a connection may be legitimately formed between Church and State. Hence, in taking a general survey of the subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and ecclesiastical powers, it is most natural and convenient to begin with considering this Voluntary principle, as it has been called, since, if true, it supersedes all further inquiry. It has been very fully discussed of late years. In common with many others, I took part in these discussions, and I have certainly not changed my opinion concerning it. I still believe it to be a portion of divine truth, fully sanctioned by the word of God, and, therefore, never to be abandoned or denied,—that an obligation lies upon nations and their rulers to have respect, in the regulation of their national affairs, and in the application of national resources, to the authority of God's word, to the welfare of the church of Christ, and the interests of true religion. This is the only scriptural truth, and therefore the only matter of principle, which those who support the doctrine of national establishments of religion feel

called upon to maintain, or about which they cherish any solicitude. Everything beyond this is of inferior importance.

It is to no purpose to adduce against this truth the doctrine of the unlawfulness of intolerance or persecution, or of the assumption of jurisdiction by civil authorities in religious and ecclesiastical matters: for the undoubted truth of these doctrines merely *limits*, or *marks out*, the sphere within which alone it is competent for the civil authorities to act in the discharge of their obligation, but certainly does not prove the non-existence of the obligation itself,—unless, indeed, it be at the same time proved (and this, we are persuaded, cannot be done) that civil authorities *cannot possibly do anything* directed to the object of promoting the interests of religion and the church, without necessarily and *ipso facto* interfering with the rights of conscience, and the freedom, independence, and spirituality of the church of Christ. It is, of course, equally irrelevant, to argue against this truth from the abuses that have been too often manifested in the practical application of it,—as when error instead of truth, a corrupt instead of a pure church, has been aided and promoted by the civil authorities; or when, even though scriptural truth and a pure church may have been aided, there was yet so much that was defective and erroneous in the way in which the civil power interposed, as to do more than to neutralize the benefits resulting from its interference. The most plausible thing that has been alleged upon this branch of the subject is, that the interference of civil authorities in religious matters, as a whole, has been accompanied and followed with a great preponderance of evil to religion. But neither does this, even though it were conceded as a matter of fact, disprove the truth of the general principle of the duty or obligation,—as it may be asserted and proved, on the other side, that the evils have arisen merely from the duty not having been correctly understood, or discharged in a right way.

It is equally little to the purpose to allege, as if in opposition to this truth, that Christ left His church dependent upon the voluntary contributions of His people, without any assistance from, or interference on the part of, civil rulers, and allowed it to continue in this condition for eight hundred years. The fact that He did so is an important one, and is fitted and intended to convey some valuable lessons; but it assuredly does not teach us anything about what the duty of nations and rulers to the church is.

The fact referred to affords satisfactory and conclusive evidence of these positions,—viz., that a condition of entire separation from the State, and entire dependence upon the contributions of the people, is a perfectly lawful and honourable condition for a church of Christ to occupy; and that the church may flourish largely, both internally and externally, without any countenance or assistance from the civil powers, and accomplish fully all its essential objects. It proves this, but it proves nothing more. The conduct of the civil authorities to the church during that period was not certainly the model according to which civil rulers ought to act,—they were not then discharging their duty to the church, for they generally persecuted it. If they were not discharging aright their duty to the church—which, by universal admission, is at least entitled to toleration,—and if their non-discharge of duty actually affected the condition of the church, then it is manifest that the manner in which they acted, and the state in which the church was, *in consequence*, placed, afford no materials whatever for deciding how they ought to have acted; and of course the whole subject of whether any, and if any, what obligations lie upon rulers in regard to religion and the church, is left wholly untouched, to be decided, as every question of truth and duty should be, by the written word.

Attempts have been made to show that, whatever duty or obligation may seem to lie upon civil rulers in this matter, the church is interdicted by the law of her Master from entering into an alliance with the State, or accepting assistance from the civil power. That the church is interdicted from sacrificing any of the rights or privileges which Christ has conferred upon her,—neglecting, or promising to neglect, any of the duties which He has imposed upon her,—disregarding, or promising to disregard, any of the directions He has given her, in order to obtain, or as a condition of enjoying, the favour and assistance of the kingdoms of this world, is certain; and assuredly *this* guilt does at this moment attach to every Protestant ecclesiastical establishment in the world. But it has never been proved, that, if the civil authorities rightly understood their duties, and were willing to discharge them aright, attaching no unwarrantable conditions to their offers of service, they could not render assistance to the church which she might be fully warranted to accept.

These considerations, when expanded and applied, are, I think,

quite sufficient to answer the objection by which the scriptural principle,—that a general obligation lies upon nations and their rulers to aim, in the regulation of national affairs, at the good of the church of Christ, and the welfare of true religion,—has been opposed; and to warrant us in maintaining that this is a portion of scriptural truth which the church ought to hold forth, and which nations and their rulers ought to act upon. At the same time, it is undoubtedly true, that in most cases the interference of the civil power in religious matters has done more evil than good; and that the instances have been very numerous in which churches have consented to sinful interferences upon the part of the civil authorities with the rights and privileges which Christ had conferred upon them. Indeed, I am not sure that any Protestant established church has ever wholly escaped this sin and degradation, except the Church of Scotland at the era of the second Reformation; for even the Revolution settlement, though to a very large extent based upon scriptural principles, was not perfectly free from all defect or imperfection. It was grievously encroached upon by the restoration of patronage in the beginning of last century. Its fundamental principles were overturned by the recent interferences of the civil authorities, so that it became impossible for a man who had scriptural views of what a church of Christ is, and of what are the principles by which its affairs ought to be regulated, to remain in connection with it.

Sec. II.—*Co-ordinate Authorities.*

Assuming that what has been called the Voluntary principle is untrue, and that nations and rulers have duties to discharge towards the church of Christ which *may* lead to the formation of an alliance, or union, or connection between them, we return to the question, What are the principles that ought to regulate the relation that may be formed and may subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, as representing *the State* and *the Church?* The relation may be formed and carried out either upon the principle of the equality and independence of the two powers, or upon that of the subordination of the one to the other; and under this latter head of subordination, it may be contended either that the Church is, and should be, subordinate to the State,—

a doctrine known in modern theological literature in this country under the name of Erastianism, often called on the continent Byzantinism; or that the State is subordinate to the Church, which is the doctrine of the Church of Rome.

The first of these principles,—viz., that of the equality and independence of the civil and the ecclesiastical powers,—the independent supremacy of each in its own proper sphere, and within its own peculiar province,—is that which is sanctioned by the word of God. It has been held in substance, though, it must be admitted, with different degrees of clearness and firmness, by most Protestant writers, but by none so clearly and firmly as by Scottish Presbyterians, who have always been accustomed to condemn all deviations from it, or corruptions of it in theory or in practice, as involving either Erastianism or Popery. The advocates of the Voluntary principle concur with us in thinking that the Church and the State are two co-equal and independent powers,—each supreme in its own province, and in the execution of its own functions; but then they deduce from this principle the conclusion that there can be no union or alliance between them, and that, because distinct and independent, they should always remain separate from each other. We dispute the soundness of this conclusion, and maintain that, in entire consistency with the preservation of their proper distinctness and independence, they may enter into a friendly alliance with each other upon terms of equality, retaining all their own proper and inherent rights and prerogatives, the unfettered exercise of their own functions,—and yet may afford to each other important assistance. Of course, we do not need to prove against them the original distinctness and independence of the civil and ecclesiastical powers, and the necessity of this distinctness and independence being always preserved, —for in this they fully concur with us,—but merely to show that the existence of this original distinctness and independence, and the necessity of its being always maintained, are not inconsistent with, and do not necessarily obstruct or prevent, the formation of a union or friendly alliance between them. That civil government is an ordinance of God; that nations and their rulers are accountable directly to God, and are not put into subjection to the church or to its office-bearers; and that the members and office-bearers of the church are, in common with other men, subject in all civil things to the powers that be,—are doctrines which can be easily

shown to be sanctioned by the word of God. That the visible church of Christ is an independent society, distinct from the kingdoms of this world, having a constitution, laws, office-bearers, and functions of its own; and that civil rulers, as such, have no right to exercise any jurisdiction or authoritative control in the regulation of its affairs, can be established with equal clearness from the sacred Scriptures. Of course, these doctrines, if true, virtually prescribe the state of things which ought to exist, and to exist always; or, in other words, establish the position, that the relation which ought to subsist between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, is one of equality and independence; and that this equality and independence must ever be maintained inviolate. Practical difficulties may arise from the existence of two equal and independent powers having jurisdiction over the same persons, and operating in some sense within the same sphere, though their provinces are different; and these have been set forth fully both by Popish and Erastian writers, under the head of an *imperium in imperio*, in order to establish the general position; but the only question is, Does not the word of God represent them as being, and of course make them to be, *de jure*, distinct and independent? and does not this impose an obligation upon all concerned to regard and treat them as such, and to preserve them as far as possible in that condition? To this question but one answer can be given; and it establishes upon the authority of God's word the truth of the Presbyterian doctrine,—for so may we call it,—that the relation of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, even when they are united together, should be regulated throughout by the principle of their distinctness from, and independence of, each other.

Sec. III.—*Erastianism.*

With reference to the theory of subordination, it is to be observed that Papists and Erastians, though running to opposite extremes, start from the same point, and combine in the use of one leading argument, which, they think, proves subordination *generally*, without determining on which side it lies. It is that to which we have already referred, as based upon the alleged absurdities and mischiefs of an *imperium in imperio*, from which they infer the necessity of *one* supreme power, which shall be

possessed of ultimate jurisdiction in all matters civil and ecclesiastical.* The answer to this we have already indicated,—viz., that the word of God represents them as two distinct societies, with distinct laws and office-bearers, and that we have no right to change their character and government, because of difficulties, actual or apprehended, especially as we can also prove that these difficulties can be easily adjusted and prevented by the application of scriptural views of the distinctive provinces, functions, and objects of the two powers or societies. Thus far the Papists and the Erastians agree in opposition to the Presbyterians and the word of God; but here they part company, and proceed in opposite directions,—the Erastians ascribing the superiority or supremacy to the civil, and the Papists to the ecclesiastical power. Let us first advert briefly to the Erastian extreme.

The Erastian controversy is much older than Erastus, who flourished soon after the Reformation, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, and had Beza for his opponent. Ever since the civil power began in the fourth century to interfere in religious matters, there have been discussions upon this subject. The first topic that was discussed at any length—for no one then disputed the right and duty of the civil magistrate to advance the cause of religion and the welfare of the church—respected the question of toleration and persecution, or the right of the civil power to inflict temporal punishment upon heretics and schismatics. This was defended by Gregory Nazianzen, and also by Augustine in his controversy with the Donatists, who changed his opinion upon the question, and changed it for the worse, having been at one time opposed to the infliction of temporal punishments for religious errors, though he always continued to oppose the lawfulness of putting men to death for heresy. This restriction, which Augustine insisted upon putting on the exercise of the magistrate's right to inflict temporal punishments upon heretics, was soon disregarded; and before the middle of the fifth century (Augustine died in 430), Pope Leo the Great, as he is called, effected and defended the taking away the life of a heretic,—the practice being thus appropriately introduced among professing Christians by the head of that communion, one of whose scriptural characteristics it

* Erastus, Lib. iii., c. i., pp. 160–1. Du Moulin, The Right of Churches, c. xxv.

is, that she is drunk with the blood of the saints. This doctrine was unchallenged, and was acted upon to a fearful extent, till the time of the Reformation, and even then it was not rejected by all the Reformers; for it cannot be denied that both Calvin and Beza maintained thē lawfulness of putting heretics to death,—a doctrine which was held by some eminent Protestant divines even in the seventeenth century. It is now universally abandoned, except by Papists, and we need not dwell upon it; but since I have been led to advert to it, I may remark, in passing, that the defence of the rights of conscience in modern times, in opposition to intolerance and persecution, has been often conducted upon very latitudinarian and dangerous principles, in the way of dwelling upon the difficulty, if not impossibility, of discerning truth,—the innocence almost, if not altogether, of error,—in short, upon grounds manifesting an ignorance or negation of the paramount claims of truth, and the responsibility connected with the discovery and the maintenance of it. This remark applies not only to Bayle and Voltaire, and to men of that stamp, but also to Jeremy Taylor and Locke, in their writings upon this subject, and to many in our own day. The best and safest course in setting forth the rights of conscience, and in opposing intolerance and persecution, is to adhere to *negative* ground, and merely to maintain that no man has a right to dictate or prescribe authoritatively to another in matters of religion,—that it is unwarrantable and unlawful to inflict temporal punishments merely on account of errors in religious opinion,—and that, of course, it is robbery to take away men's property, and murder to take away their lives, merely on this ground.

The Emperors, from the time when they came to make a profession of Christianity, and to interfere in ecclesiastical matters, assumed a large measure of authority in regulating the affairs of the church. The distinction between things without and things within—ἔξω και ἔσω—on which Constantine professed to act, and which to some extent he did observe, was soon forgotten, or interpreted so as to bring almost everything under civil control; and for several centuries, what would be called in the language of modern times gross Erastianism generally prevailed. The first thing that interfered with its dominion was the rising power of the Bishops of Rome, who at length succeeded, to some extent, in depriving the civil power of some of its just rights, and subjecting

it to ecclesiastical control. In the disputes between the Popes and the temporal sovereigns, and in the treatises written on both sides in defence of the claims and procedure of the two parties, there seems to have been scarcely an approach made towards sound scriptural views upon the proper relation of the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. There was a constant leaning, both in what was done and in what was written, either to the Popish or the Erastian extreme. After the Reformation, many of the Protestant princes succeeded in securing to themselves a large share of the power in ecclesiastical matters which had formerly been held by the Bishop of Rome, which our Presbyterian forefathers used to say was just changing the Pope, but not the popedom; and in no country were they more successful than in England, in none less so than in Scotland. The alleged merit of Erastus, which has procured for him the honour of being ordinarily spoken of in theological literature as the representative of a set of opinions much older than his time, and which he himself did not do very much towards unfolding and applying, lay in this, that he, more distinctly than any before him, laid down the principle that Christ has not appointed a government in the church in the hands of church officers distinct from the civil magistrate. Though Erastus himself applied this principle chiefly to exclude excommunication, or the exercise of jurisdiction by the church in the admission or expulsion of ordinary members, yet it obviously admits of, and indeed requires, a wider application; and the principle itself, and all that naturally is involved in, or results from, it, has been usually exposed and denounced by Presbyterian divines under the designation of Erastianism. The word is often used, indeed, in a wider sense, as a general designation of views which ascribe a larger measure of authority to the civil magistrate in religious matters, than those who use it regard as warranted by Scripture—just as Pelagianism is often used to designate, in general, views which ascribe a larger measure of power to men to do the will of God, than those who use it think the Scripture sanctions. The general usage of theological writers abundantly warrants this wide and vague application of it; but among Scottish Presbyterians it has been commonly employed in the somewhat more restricted and definite sense which has just been explained.

Although Erastianism, used as a general designation of views

which ascribe to civil rulers a power and authority in religious matters which the Scripture does not sanction, may be justly enough described as making the Church subordinate to the State, in opposition to the Popish extreme of making the State subordinate to the Church, yet the direct and formal maintenance of this position has not usually been the form which the controversy assumed. The Papists, indeed, do not scruple openly and explicitly to lay down the doctrine of the subordination of the State to the Church, and think that they can adduce a plausible argument in support of this doctrine from the higher and more exalted character of the ends or objects for which the church was instituted. Erastians, having no such plausible pretence for laying down an analogous, though opposite, general position, have felt it necessary to go about the elevation of the civil, and the degradation of the ecclesiastical, power in a somewhat more indirect and insidious way; and the most ingenious contrivance they have been able to devise with this view, is to deny that Christ has appointed a distinct and independent *government* in the church for the regulation of its affairs. They first attempt to give some measure of probability to the position by the principle formerly adverted to and exposed—of the necessity of there being but one supreme government, possessed of ultimate jurisdiction in all things; and then they try to show that, in the scriptural view of the church and its constitution, there is no provision made for the exercise of anything like an independent judicial or forensic authority in deciding controversies or causes that may arise about religious and ecclesiastical matters—labouring to explain away the scriptural statements by which it has been conclusively proved that the right of deciding judicially or forensically all those questions which must arise wherever a church exists, and is in operation, belongs, by Christ's appointment, not to civil rulers, but to ecclesiastical office-bearers and the church itself. The main question, then, comes to this,—Has Christ appointed a distinct government in the church, with judicial authority for the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, and a right of deciding, according to the word of God, all questions that may arise in the discharge of its ordinary functions?—or, what is virtually and practically the same question in another form,—Is it accordant with Scripture, that civil rulers should possess and exercise jurisdiction, or a right of authoritative judicial decision, in ecclesiastical matters?

Perhaps it may be said that men have been often called Erastians who had never denied a distinct government in the church, or ascribed jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters to civil rulers. This is quite true, but it does not by any means follow that the designation was unwarranted. Erastians have commonly been men who were not so much concerned about the maintenance of permanent scriptural truth, or the establishment of general theological principles, as about the promotion of some present selfish object,—defending the existing proceedings of civil rulers, or palliating their own conduct in submitting to civil encroachments upon the rights of the church. Hence they have usually avoided, as well as they could, the assertion of general positions,—the maintenance of abstract principles,—and have exerted their ingenuity in keeping the true question and its proper merits in the background. Some of them, like the *judicious* Hooker, have confounded altogether the members of the Church and the State, and have virtually denied that the church is a distinct independent society; others, admitting that it is in some sense a distinct independent society, have denied that this society has a distinct government, or an independent power of judicial decision in ecclesiastical matters, according to the word of God; while others, again, without formally denying a distinct government altogether, have set themselves to curtail the sphere or province within which this government is to be exercised,—especially by fabricating and trying to illustrate a distinction, which is altogether unnecessary and unfounded, between spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. And many more, who might with perfect justice be called Erastians, have abstained wholly from the discussion of general principles, and have confined themselves to an attempt to palliate and gloss over the interferences which the civil authority might happen at the time to be making, and opposition or resistance to which might have proved inconvenient or dangerous. The Erastian constitution of the Church of England was certainly not settled as the result of anything like a deliberate consideration of what, on general scriptural principles, ought to be the relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. It was determined solely by the arbitrary usurpations of Henry VIII. and his daughter Queen Elizabeth, and the submission of the church to almost anything which they chose to demand; and the consequences

have been, first, that in the thirty-seventh Article of that church, the supremacy which is attributed to the sovereign is described with a considerable measure of vagueness and ambiguity, while there is enough in it to warrant us in ascribing to that church the assertion of the jurisdiction of civil rulers in ecclesiastical matters, in opposition to the word of God; and, secondly, that Episcopalian divines, in defending the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown as established by law, have never ventured to moot the great principles of the question as to the nature and conditions of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in a frank and manly way, or to discuss general doctrines upon the subject, but have contented themselves with palliating the existing state of things, and adducing examples of the exercise of similar authority on the part of Christian emperors before their powers were curtailed by the Bishops of Rome.

Sec. IV.—*Popish Theory.*

We have now only to advert to the Popish theory, some knowledge of which is necessary to understand the contests *inter imperium et sacerdotium* which occupy a very prominent place in the ecclesiastical history of several centuries, and a correct acquaintance with which is necessary in order to see how utterly baseless is the charge which has been so often adduced against the scriptural principles upon this subject—that they are identical with those of the Church of Rome.

This charge has been frequently adduced against Presbyterian principles by Erastians, and it is still a favourite one with them even at the present day. I have had occasion before to show that it requires some portion of knowledge and discrimination to handle aright the charge of a doctrine or practice being Popish; and this subject affords another illustration of the lesson. The practice among Erastians of charging scriptural Presbyterian principles with being Popish, seems to have originated in England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. At that period, the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown,—which, of course, can be defended only on Erastian grounds,—was assailed by two classes of adversaries—the Puritans or Presbyterians, and the Papists. So far as mere opposition to the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown is concerned, it is quite true that the Presbyterians and the Papists had

a common cause to maintain, and supported it to some extent upon common grounds. Its Episcopalian defenders found it no easy matter to answer the arguments of either party upon this subject, and therefore adopted a policy, which has been always a favourite one with Erastians, of evading the real merits of the question, and endeavouring to create a prejudice against their opponents by dwelling upon the mere fact, that Presbyterians and Papists agreed upon this subject, and trying to persuade men to receive this as a proof of the erroneousness of the principles which they held. It is quite true that there are some points of agreement upon this subject between Presbyterians and Papists; but it is also true that there is a clear line of demarcation between their principles, upon the general subject of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities; and it is *not* true,—though this is the practical conclusion which Erastians would wish to insinuate,—that there is no medium between Popish and Erastian principles. In so far as Presbyterians agree upon this subject with Papists, they undertake to prove that their views are sanctioned by the word of God; and when this is proved, it is no sufficient reason to abandon them because they are also held —though, as in the case of many other doctrines, held with some grossly corrupt additions—by the Church of Rome.

We would briefly advert, first, to the points in which Presbyterians and Papists agree upon this general subject; and then, secondly, to those on which they differ. The substance of their agreement just lies in this, that they concur in opposing all Erastian principles,—*i.e.*, everything implying, or tending towards, or deducible from, the subordination of the Church to the State, or the ascription to civil rulers of any jurisdiction or right of authoritative control, whether direct or indirect, in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, in the government of Christ's house; and on this ground they concur in opposing the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, and all that is implied in it. They concur also, of course, in the leading scriptural grounds on which they rest their opposition to Erastianism, which are in substance these: first, that though the Scripture imposes upon civil rulers an obligation to promote the interests of true religion and the church of Christ, it does not invest them with any jurisdiction or authoritative control in religious or ecclesiastical matters; *i.e.*, though, to use a distinction in frequent use among the old Presbyterian

writers in opposing Erastianism, it gives them a power *circa sacra*, it gives them none *in sacris;* and, secondly, that the scriptural views of the origin and character, constitution and government of the Christian Church, are necessarily and obviously exclusive of the idea of its being subordinate to the State, or of civil rulers having any jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of its affairs. These are the scriptural grounds on which all intelligent opposition to Erastianism *must* rest; and they are not the less clear and conclusive because Papists concur with Presbyterians in maintaining them.

Opposition to Erastianism, however, is not a mere negation, when viewed in connection with the scriptural grounds on which it is based. It includes or implies an assertion of some important positive principles with respect to the constitution and government of the church of Christ. And we need not be afraid to say, that there is one great and important scriptural truth upon this subject which, like the doctrine of the Trinity, has been always held by the Church of Rome, and been fully followed out by it to all its consequences,—viz., that the church is a divine institution established by Christ, placed by Him in a condition of entire independence of any secular or foreign control, and invested by Him with full powers of self-government, and complete sufficiency within itself for the execution of all its functions. The doctrine of the church—meaning thereby the statement of the principles of Scripture on the subject of the church—has, as we have had occasion to show, been greatly corrupted by the Church of Rome; but the doctrine just stated, which that church holds, assuredly has the full sanction of scriptural authority, and therefore *all* men are not only warranted, but bound, to believe it. In this doctrine with respect to the character and constitution of the church, and in the consequent rejection of all secular or civil jurisdiction in the administration of its affairs, Papists and Presbyterians do certainly agree; and whatever may be the motives which induce Papists to maintain it, all Presbyterians who are worthy of the name adhere to it, because they believe and can prove that it is taught in the word of God. In accordance with the general Erastian policy already described, the defenders or palliators of civil jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters have evaded a fair and manly discussion of the scriptural grounds on which their views and conduct have been assailed; and the Episcopalian

defenders of the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown have always shown a very great unwillingness to lay down any distinct or definite positions by which they might vindicate their own cause; and while often on this account contradicting one another, they have found their principal satisfaction in trying to play off the Presbyterians against the Papists, and the Papists against the Presbyterians, and in producing instances from the earlier history of the church, in which civil rulers assumed as wide a jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters as that which they are bound by their position to defend. Calderwood* gives the following account of the way in which they usually defended the supremacy of the Crown against the Papists; and it is strikingly descriptive not only of them, but of all who down to our day have acted upon Erastian principles:—"Qui Primatus Regii jura discere voluerit ex Hierarchicorum contra Pontificios scriptis polemicis, nihil certi reperiet. Nam vel Andabatarum more inter se dimicant, vel de facto potius exempla quorundam Imperatorum a recta norma sæpius deflectentium congerunt, quam de jure argumenta proferunt. Ex statutis regni, Commissariorum jurisdictione in causis Ecclesiasticis, et tabulis Hierarchiæ, facilius et certius omnia Primatus Regii jura edoceri possumus."

While this is the ordinary aspect presented by the writings of Erastians, whether engaged in defending the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, or the ecclesiastical supremacy of the civil courts, we find in some Popish writers not only unanswerable arguments against all Erastianism, but likewise much good scriptural matter in defence of the dignity and independence of the church of Christ, brought out occasionally in a tone and spirit which is certainly of a somewhat higher and nobler kind than is usually exhibited in any exposition of the grovelling and secular views of the Erastians. But the Church of Rome has polluted and corrupted all the doctrines of God's word, even those in which she has retained in form a substantially sound profession of the truth; and it is mainly by her errors and corruptions upon the subject of the constitution, and government, and ordinances of the church, and of the relation that ought to subsist between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, that she has gained and preserved her despotic control over the minds and consciences of

* Altare Damascenum, c. i., p. 27. Ed. 1708.

men and the regulation of the affairs of the world. She holds the theory that the civil power is subordinate to the ecclesiastical; and she has followed out this theory, both in speculation and in practice, to an extent which has produced much error and much mischief. Presbyterians deny equally the subordination of the civil power to the ecclesiastical, and of the ecclesiastical to the civil. They concur with Papists in holding the distinctness and independence of the Church, and her supremacy in her own province; but they concur equally with the Erastians in holding that the same independence and supremacy belong to the State within *its* province. They go this length with both, because the word of God requires it; but they go no further with either, because the word of God forbids it. This scriptural Presbyterian principle has been generally and correctly described as involving a co-ordination of powers, and a mutual subordination of persons. The co-ordination of powers just means the entire co-equality—independence—of the two powers, each being supreme in its province, and with reference to its own objects and functions; and the mutual subordination of persons means, first, and more generally, that the same persons, if members of the church, are subject to the civil power, and to that alone, in all civil matters, and to the ecclesiastical office-bearers, and to them alone, in ecclesiastical matters, in so far as any earthly authority is entitled to regulate them; and secondly, and more specifically, that civil rulers, if church members, are just as much subject to the control of ecclesiastical office-bearers in ecclesiastical matters as their subjects are, and that ecclesiastical office-bearers are just as fully subject to civil rulers, in all civil things, as any other members of the community. This is the scriptural Presbyterian principle, and it differs clearly and palpably in some most important respects from the common doctrine of Papists.

The Erastians have scarcely anything to allege in favour of the subordination of the ecclesiastical to the civil, except the cavil about an *imperium in imperio*, in which the Papists agree with them, and which we formerly exposed. The Papists, in addition to this, plead, in support of the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, the higher and more exalted character of the ends or objects to which the latter is directed. This affords no ground whatever for subordination in respect of authority or jurisdiction, while the equality of the two in this respect,—their co-ordination

as opposed to subordination,—is clearly involved in the views of them which are presented to us in the Scriptures. The leading Popish position, then, is unfounded and untrue. But we have at present to do chiefly with the applications which they make of this position—the consequences which they deduce from it. The position may be regarded generally as ascribing to the ecclesiastical power a right to exercise jurisdiction or authoritative control over the civil. A learned and liberal jurist of the Gallican school, named Barclay, wrote in the beginning of the seventeenth century a treatise *De potestate papæ*, in opposition to the temporal or secular power of the Pope, which was judged worthy of being answered in a separate work by Cardinal Bellarmine. Barclay laid down this as his fundamental position: "Potestatem ecclesiasticam, et politicam jure divino distinctas, et separatas esse, ut, quamvis ambæ a Deo sint, utraque suis terminis conclusa in alterius fines invadere suo jure nequeat, neutrique in alteram imperium sit." Bellarmine admitted the truth of the principal part of this position, but objected to the last clause of it, as involving a denial of the right of the ecclesiastical power to exercise jurisdiction or authoritative control over the civil. He says, after quoting Barclay's position, "Hoc principium, sive fundamentum in ultima particula falsum omnino esse contendimus, in illis videlicet ultimis verbis, *neutrique in alteram imperium sit.* Si quidem affirmamus, ecclesiasticam potestatem, distinctam quidem esse a politica, sed ea non modo nobiliorem, verum etiam ita superiorem esse, ut eam dirigere, et corrigere, et in certis casibus, in ordine videlicet ad finem spiritualem, et vitam eternam, eidem imperare possit."*

In what, then, do the Papists regard this power of directing, correcting, and commanding, which they ascribe to the ecclesiastical authorities, in respect to the civil, as consisting?

First, it consists in this, that civil rulers are bound to be regulated, in whatever they do in regard to religion, not directly by the word of God, or their own conscientious convictions of what is true or false, right or wrong, but by the decisions and orders of the church; whereas Presbyterians hold that civil rulers have just the same liberty of conscience as ecclesiastical office-bearers, and

* Bellarminus, De potestate summi Pontificis in rebus temporalibus, cap. ii., p. 38.

are just as much entitled and bound to judge for themselves, and with a view to the regulation of their own conduct, and the discharge of their own duty, what is true or false, right or wrong, without being under any obligation to be guided by the decisions or directions of the church, as such, irrespective of their accordance with the word of God. Of course, it is not contended that either civil or ecclesiastical rulers are entitled to form what judgments they please upon any matters of religion, and to be guided merely by what they may sincerely and conscientiously believe. The word of God is the supreme and only standard by which all men, publicly and privately, collectively and individually, in a civil or in an ecclesiastical capacity, are bound to regulate their opinions and actions in all matters of religion, and in all matters to which its statements may apply. This is an important truth, which should never be overlooked; but what Presbyterians contend for is, that civil rulers have the same independent right of judgment as ecclesiastical office-bearers,—the same access to God's word,—and are equally entitled and bound to judge for themselves as to its meaning, and their consequent duty in matters of faith and practice. Civil rulers are entitled and bound to feel that, in all they may do in regard to religion and the church, it is to God they are responsible, and it is by His word that they ought to be regulated. The Church of Rome, no doubt, professes to be guided by the word of God; but then she insists that civil rulers, *in virtue of the alleged subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical*, shall, without personal investigation, at once take her decisions and decrees as certainly true and righteous, and receive them as directly and immediately regulating the manner in which they are to act, or to exercise their civil power, their control over the persons and properties of men in everything pertaining to religion. The Popish doctrine makes the civil ruler the mere tool or servant of the church, and represents him as bound implicitly to carry out the church's objects, to execute her sentences, and to make everything subservient to the accomplishment of all her designs; while the Presbyterian doctrine represents civil rulers as holding immediately of God, entitled and bound to judge for themselves according to His word, and leaves to them fully and honestly the same liberty of conscience, the same supreme and independent jurisdiction in their own province, as the church claims in hers. Presbyterians have been often charged with claiming the same authori-

tative control over the conscience and judgment of civil rulers as the Papists do; but the charge is utterly unfounded. Their principles do not require it,—nay, do not admit of it; while the general principle of Popery, as well as its special doctrine upon this subject, demand, in consistency, that they should put forth such a claim, and exert themselves to the utmost to realize or enforce it. The true Presbyterian principle upon this subject is thus admirably stated by Gillespie: "The civil sanction added to Church-government and discipline, is a free and voluntary act of the Magistrate. That is, Church-government doth not, *ex natura rei*, necessitate the Magistrate to aid, assist, or corroborate the same, by adding the strength of a law. But the Magistrate is free in this, to do or not to do, to do more or to do less, as he will answer to God and his conscience: it is a cumulative act of favour done by the Magistrate. My meaning is not, that it is free to the Magistrate *in genere moris;* but *in genere entis.* The Magistrate ought to add the civil sanction *hic et nunc*, or he ought not to do it. It is either a duty or a sin; it is not indifferent. But my meaning is, the Magistrate is free herein from all coaction, yea from all necessity and obligation; other than ariseth from the word of God, binding his conscience. There is no power on earth, Civil or Spiritual, to constrain him. The Magistrate himself is his own judge on earth, how far he is to do any cumulative act of favour to the Church. Which takes off that calumny, that Presbyterial Government doth force or compel the conscience of the Magistrate."*

The *second* conclusion which the Papists deduce from the general doctrine of the superiority of the ecclesiastical over the civil is, that the church, and especially the Pope as the head of it, has power, or a right of authoritative control, in temporal or civil matters; while Presbyterians, following out fully the principle of the independence and equality, or co-ordination in point of jurisdiction, of the two powers, restrict equally civil and ecclesiastical rulers to their own sphere or province. Some Popish writers ascribe to the Pope direct supreme power in temporal things, holding him to be the Lord paramount of the world, or at least of the Christian world; while others, among whom is Bellarmine, deny to him direct and immediate jurisdiction in civil things, but ascribe

* Gillespie, Aaron's Rod Blossoming, B. ii., c. iii., p. 182.

to him an indirect authority in these matters, to be exercised *in ordine ad spiritualia*, which, as he is the judge of when and how far the interests of religion may require him to interfere in secular matters, is just giving him as much of temporal power as he may find it convenient to claim, or may be able to enforce. Erastians have often asserted that Presbyterians claim some similar indirect power in temporal things, or over the proceedings of civil rulers; but the charge is wholly unfounded: for Presbyterians do not ask anything of civil rulers but what they undertake to prove that the Scripture requires of them, and what they are therefore bound to do, not as subordinate to the church, but as subordinate to God's word; and they do not pretend, as Papists do, that the sentences which the church may be warranted to pronounce upon civil rulers, when church members, on the ground of sins committed, *affect their civil status or authority*, their right to exercise civil power, and the obligation of their subjects to obey them. It is the doctrine of Presbyterians, as stated in our Confession, that "infidelity, or difference of religion, does not make void the magistrate's just power,"—a principle which of course implies, and implies *a fortiori*, that no step which may be competent to the church, as such, and no sentence which the ecclesiastical authorities may pronounce, can tell authoritatively upon the relation and mutual duties of rulers and subjects, or upon the actual regulation of civil affairs; while the Church of Rome holds that, in the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, there is involved a right on the part of the church, and especially of the Pope as the head of it, to make ecclesiastical sentences affect the *status* and authority of civil rulers, the validity of civil laws, and the regulation of civil affairs.

The *third* and last point in which the general doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject differs from that of Presbyterians, is the claim set up by Papists on behalf of ecclesiastical office-bearers, of exemption from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals even in civil or temporal matters,—that is, in questions affecting their persons or property. As the Erastian defenders of the supremacy of the Crown have generally held that the church has no right to exercise ecclesiastical discipline upon the sovereign, its temporal head; in like manner, and upon an analogous, though opposite ground, the Papists claim that the persons and property of ecclesiastics should not be subject to the juris-

diction of the ordinary civil courts, but only to that of separate ecclesiastical tribunals. It is this claim, and this alone, which is intended to be denied in our Confession of Faith, when, after speaking of the just power of magistrates not being made void by infidelity or difference of religion, it adds, "from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted." It is this exemption of the person and property of ecclesiastics from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals, that is commonly intended by Popish writers when they speak of ecclesiastical liberty, or the freedom of the church; and Presbyterians concur with all other Protestants in maintaining that *this* is a liberty or freedom which Christ has not conferred upon His church, and which, when asserted as a right, runs counter to scriptural views of the authority and functions of civil rulers. Some of the more moderate Papists have declined to ground this exemption upon a divine right or upon scriptural authority, and have represented it merely as a reasonable and proper concession made to the church by the civil power; but most of them have held it to be necessarily involved in the general principle of the subordination of the civil to the ecclesiastical, and to have also directly, and by itself, special warrant in the word of God; while Presbyterians have fully and honestly carried out in this, as in other respects, their great scriptural principles of a co-ordination of powers, and a mutual subordination of persons.

It is right to mention that there are one or two incidents in the history of the contentions between King James and the Church of Scotland, which have been represented, and not without plausibility, as involving something like a claim upon the part of the church to this Popish exemption in civil matters from the jurisdiction of the ordinary civil tribunals. The allegation is merely plausible, and cannot be fully established,—though it may be admitted that some rash and unguarded statements were made upon the occasions referred to. That this is all that can be truly alleged, has been shown by Dr M'Crie's admirable Life of Andrew Melville.

In all these important respects,—those which affect the foundations of the whole subject,—there is a clear and palpable line of demarcation between Presbyterian and Popish doctrines in regard to the principles that ought to regulate the relation between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities; and the common Erastian allegation of their identity is proved to be utterly unfounded in

fact, and may not unfairly be regarded as an unwarrantable attempt to create prejudice by misrepresentation, and to escape thereby from a fair discussion of the question upon its merits.

The substance of this whole matter is this: Christ requires us to render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and to God what is God's. Erastians violate the precept by giving to Cæsar what is God's,—God's in such a sense that Cæsar has no authority, and is entitled to no obedience, in anything regarding it. Papists violate this precept by taking from Cæsar what rightfully belongs to him, under the pretence of giving to God what He Himself has given to Cæsar, though not to the exclusion of His own paramount control; while Presbyterians,—*i.e.*, all who have been deserving of the name, and have really understood their own professed principles,—have fully obeyed it, in its letter and in its spirit, by ascribing to the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities their true character, their due power, their legitimate jurisdiction, each in its own province; and by maintaining fully and faithfully the exclusive supremacy of God as the only Lord of the conscience, and of Jesus Christ as the only King and Head of the Church, while acknowledging the complete and absolute control of the civil power over the persons and property of all the members of the community.

CHAPTER XIV.

SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY.

The twelfth century produced two works which exerted an extensive and long-continued influence upon theological literature, and are therefore entitled to some share of our attention: Peter Lombard's "Libri Quatuor Sententiarum," or Four Books of Sentences,—the foundation and text-book of the Scholastic Theology; and the Decree of Gratian, the basis of the "Corpus Juris Canonici," or Canon Law. From the twelfth century till the Reformation, the great body of the writers upon ecclesiastical subjects were divided into two classes, who were called Theologians and Canonists; and the chief occupation of the Theologians was to comment upon Lombard's Four Books of Sentences, while that of the Canonists was to comment upon the Decree of Gratian, and upon the additions made to it during the next two centuries, making up the body of the Canon Law. The scholastic theology has exerted a very considerable influence upon the theology of modern times—not only among Popish but Protestant writers—and the Canon Law has always been, and still is, the basis of the science of ecclesiastical jurisprudence; and therefore all who aspire to the character of well-instructed theologians ought to know something about them. We will first advert to Lombard's Four Books of Sentences, and the Scholastic Theology; and then to Gratian's Decree, and the Canon Law.

The leading feature of the scholastic theology, or the theology of the schools and the schoolmen, as they are called, was the application of the metaphysics and dialectics of Aristotle to the subject of theology. By some its origin is traced back to Augustine; but this notion has no better foundation to rest upon than the facts that that great man manifested a fondness for philosophical speculations, and sometimes indulged in them unnecessarily, and that he discussed every subject in an exact and

logical way. Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, who flourished in the eleventh century, and was the principal opponent of Berengarius, is more usually and more justly reckoned, in some sense, the founder of the scholastic theology, inasmuch as he brought, to a considerable extent, both the materials of metaphysical speculation and the forms of dialectic argumentation to bear—first, upon the discussion of those topics which were connected with the nature and mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, and afterwards upon some of the other recondite subjects in theology. The history of scholastic theology is usually divided, by those who have treated of it formally and at length, into three periods, —the first extending from the time of Lanfranc till that of Albertus Magnus, who flourished about the year 1220, a period which includes the production of the Four Books of the Sentences; the second extending from the time of Albertus till that of Durandus, who flourished about the year 1330, and including nearly all the most celebrated names among the schoolmen, except Lombard, such as Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura, and John Duns Scotus; and the third and last extending for nearly two hundred years from the time of Durandus till the Reformation. It can scarcely be said that these divisions are marked out by any very palpable differences in the mode in which theological subjects were generally discussed in the different periods, though it may be said in general that the defects and mischiefs of the system were not fully developed till the second of these periods, and that no very material change took place during the third either for better or worse; while it produced no men to be compared, in point of ingenuity and acuteness, with some of those who flourished during the second period.

The general object of the schoolmen was to exhibit the substance of Christian truth in a systematic and connected order,—an object undoubtedly of the highest importance, and constituting indeed, when rightly accomplished, the crown and completion of the study of theology as a science; and the great defect of the method they ordinarily pursued was, that they did not adopt a right standard, by seeking to ascertain the meaning of scriptural statements, and then aiming at systematizing, expounding, and defending the truths which the word of God contains. They were almost wholly destitute of right views of what modern divines call the *principium theologiæ*,—meaning thereby the source from which theological

knowledge is to be derived, and the rule or standard by which theological doctrines are to be judged of. Before the scholastic theology arose, the word of God had come to be very much neglected and superseded, and the knowledge necessary for interpreting it aright was almost universally wanting in the Western Church. It is certain, for instance, that Thomas Aquinas, who was in many respects the most eminent, and perhaps, all things considered, the most influential of the schoolmen, knew nothing of Greek or Hebrew. Long before their time, it had become the almost universal practice to settle all theological disputes, not by studying the word of God, and ascertaining the meaning of its statements, but by an appeal to tradition, and the authority of the fathers, and to the decrees of popes and councils. The schoolmen certainly did nothing to introduce a sounder method of theological investigation, by appealing to Scripture, and labouring to ascertain the exact meaning of its statements; on the contrary, they may be said to have still further corrupted it, by introducing, in combination with tradition and mere authority, something resembling the rationalistic element of the supremacy of human reason,—not, indeed, that they formally and avowedly laid down this principle, but that their neglect of Scripture, and their unbounded indulgence in unwarranted and presumptuous speculations upon points in regard to which there could manifestly be no standard of appeal but just their own reasonings, had a tendency to encourage it.

This leads us to notice the other great defect of the scholastic theology, and that is, its consisting, to a large extent, of the discussion of useless and unprofitable questions, which cannot be determined, and which would be of no practical value if they could. A very considerable amount of mental activity was manifested in the twelfth, and still more in the two following centuries. There are some of the schoolmen who have never been surpassed in ingenuity, acuteness, and penetration. But being not in general possessed of much erudition, and having adopted erroneous principles of investigation, there was great want of materials on which they might exercise their mental powers; and this state of things tended strongly to produce what is one leading characteristic of their works,—viz., the formation of endless distinctions and differences upon every topic of inquiry, and the broaching and prosecution of all sorts of subtle questions, which, though not admitting of determinate answers, afforded abundant scope for

the exercise of the mental powers. Lombard's Four Books of Sentences contain discussions of many useless and intricate questions,—especially in regard to the Trinity, and in regard to angels, —questions with respect to which it may be doubted whether he himself, or any other man, ever fully understood their meaning, and, far more, whether they could bring any intelligible standard or principles to bear upon their solution. But he exhibited a large measure of reasonableness and moderation in this respect, as compared with his successors. A large proportion of the writings of the schoolmen are just commentaries upon Lombard's Four Books of Sentences, which most of them took as their text-book; and in these commentaries they started and prosecuted innumerable questions of the most intricate, and at the same time trifling, description, and, in the investigation of them, often manifested an acuteness and penetration which, if better directed, and under more judicious guidance, might have contributed to produce important and valuable results.

This feature of the scholastic theology is fitted to impress upon our minds the importance and necessity of our being careful to keep in view the object of ascertaining whether the various questions that may be started really admit of a definite and certain solution or not. Indeed, when any question is proposed to us, the first inquiry that should suggest itself is, whether there be, indeed, any standard by which it can be tried—any available materials by which it may be decided in one way or another. The schoolmen seem never to have entertained the question of settling the limits between what could be known and decided, and what could not; and in their ordinary practice it is certain that they entirely disregarded it. I am persuaded that the Scriptures contain materials for deciding many more of the questions, both of a doctrinal and practical kind, which have been discussed among theologians, than might at first sight appear, and that they are fitted to be much more extensively a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path than many seem to suppose. Still there can be no reasonable doubt that many questions have been discussed among theologians which, though connected with scriptural topics, the word of God affords no materials for determining; and there has certainly been no period in the history of theological literature when so many questions of this sort were started, and were eagerly and zealously discussed, as during the prevalence of

the scholastic theology. In regard to the more obvious and important topics in theology, they rested mainly upon the authority of the fathers, developing much more fully the germs of errors and corruptions which are to be found in the writings of the ancients; but then they constructed upon these an almost endless series of distinctions and questions, of which no profitable use could be made, and which ran up into investigations that could never be brought to any certain or satisfactory result.

As the schoolmen did not adopt a right rule or standard for deciding theological questions,—as they did not employ a right method of investigation,—and indulged in presumptuous speculations upon many useless questions, which admit of no clear or certain solution,—it is plain that they possess but little of that which constitutes the *highest* and *most direct* value of theological works, —viz., establishing scriptural truths upon a firm foundation, and exposing anti-scriptural errors by satisfactory arguments. It must not, however, be concluded that they are of no value now to the student of theology, or that they should be entirely neglected. They are fitted indirectly to teach and illustrate some important lessons, attention to which may tend to guard against some practical errors. The scholastic theology forms an important era in the history of theological science; and this of itself proves that some useful instruction may be derived from it. Very extraordinary mental powers, even though greatly perverted in their use and application, were then brought to bear upon the study of theological subjects; and it holds more or less true of all sciences, that, in whatever circumstances great intellectual power has been brought to bear upon them, some useful lessons may be learned from the results that have been produced. But besides these more vague and indefinite advantages of some knowledge of the scholastic theology, there are others of a more direct and extensive kind. The labours of the schoolmen, though they have done little or nothing to establish truth or to expose error in a satisfactory and conclusive way, have done much to affect the way and manner in which theological subjects have been ever since discussed. Many of their distinctions have been found to be of great use in explaining and defending some of the doctrines of theology, and have been extensively and successfully employed for that purpose by modern theologians. Just as, were there no other

reason why it is necessary that educated men should be acquainted with the classical writers of antiquity, this consideration of itself would be sufficient to enforce the necessity of studying them,—that they have exerted so powerful and extensive an influence upon the literature of almost all modern nations, that we cannot fully understand and appreciate the literature of our own country without some acquaintance with the authors of Greece and Rome; so, in like manner, the writings of the schoolmen have exerted so much influence upon the way in which theological subjects have been since discussed, that some acquaintance with them is highly useful, if not necessary, to open the way to a full comprehension and appreciation of modern writers upon systematic theology.

Every one must feel that it is interesting and useful to have some knowledge of the general condition of the church just before the great era of the Reformation. Now, the works of the schoolmen exhibit the condition in which Christian doctrine,—at all times a most important feature in the aspect of the church,—was found at the time when the Reformers were raised up by God for improving it. The scholastic theology was the immediate antecedent, in historical progression, to the theology of the Reformation, and the former exerted no inconsiderable influence upon the latter. The writings of the Reformers not unfrequently exposed the errors and defects of the theology of the schoolmen, which they regarded as one of the bulwarks of the Popish system; and this fact of itself renders it desirable to possess some knowledge of their works. The Reformers themselves do not make very much use of scholastic distinctions and phraseology, as they in general avoided intricate and perplexed discussions; but when, in subsequent times, more subtle disputations upon difficult topics arose among Protestant theologians, it was found necessary, if these topics were to be discussed at all, to have recourse to a considerable extent to scholastic distinctions and phraseology; and it was also found that the use and application of scholastic distinctions and phraseology were fitted to throw some light upon questions which otherwise would have been still darker and more perplexed than they are. In reading the writings of modern divines, who were familiar with the scholastic theology, we are not unfrequently struck with the light which their definitions and distinctions cast upon obscure and intricate topics; while, at the same time, we are sometimes made to feel that an imperfect

acquaintance with scholastic literature throws some difficulty in the way of our fully and easily understanding more modern discussions in which scholastic materials are used and applied. Take, for example, Turretine's system, a book which is of inestimable value. In the perusal of this great work, occasionally some difficulty will be found, especially at first, in fully understanding its statements, from ignorance of, or imperfect acquaintance with, scholastic distinctions and phraseology; but, as the reader becomes familiar with these, he will see more and more clearly how useful they are, in the hands of a man like Turretine, in bringing out the exact truth upon difficult and intricate questions, and especially in solving the objections of adversaries. These considerations may perhaps be sufficient to show that it is worth while to give some degree of attention to the study of scholastic theology, so far at least as to acquire some acquaintance with the distinctions and the language of the schoolmen.

These observations, however, regard chiefly the scholastic mode of discussing theological subjects,—the dress or garb which the schoolmen wear; and it may now be proper to say a few words in regard to the substance of the doctrine which they generally taught. The schoolmen were generally faithful adherents of the Church of Rome, and flourished at a period when that church had very grossly departed from the faith once delivered to the saints. Their doctrine, consequently, upon most of the leading points of Christianity, is substantially Popish. Still there were some circumstances connected with them, which tended to some extent to preserve them from error, and which still render them in a certain measure useful witnesses against some of the corruptions of Popery. The first and most important of these is, that many of them relied greatly upon the authority of Augustine, and followed to a large extent the system of doctrine which he taught. This, of course, kept them right in some measure upon the doctrines of grace, though some of them grievously corrupted the simplicity of scriptural truth upon these subjects, by an infusion of the philosophy of Aristotle. We formerly had occasion to mention, that the writings of Augustine exerted a most salutary influence upon the doctrine of the church; and that a large portion at once of the orthodoxy and of the piety that appeared in the Western Church for about a thousand years, was to be traced more or less directly to his labours and writings. He was almost

the only one of the fathers in whose writings the subtle dialectic minds of the schoolmen could find anything that was congenial, and many of them adopted and defended his leading views of divine truth. This was well for them, and well for the church; for there is reason to believe that, even in the age of the schoolmen, the doctrines of Augustine, which are the doctrines of the word of God, were sometimes made instrumental by God's Spirit in promoting the conversion of sinners. The Church of Rome has always professed to revere the authority of Augustine, while yet the general strain of the practical teaching of most of her writers has been commonly of a Pelagian cast; and in so far as it has been so, the authority of some of the leading schoolmen may be adduced against it, and in support of the leading truths which have been held by the great body of Protestants.

There are two other facts about the schoolmen which enable and authorize us to adduce some of them as witnesses and authorities against the Church of Rome:* First, there are some points controverted between Protestants and Papists, in which modern Papists have shown much anxiety to explain away the true doctrine of their church, or to involve it in obscurity and perplexity, but with respect to which the schoolmen speak out in a clear and explicit way; thus affording at least a very strong presumption that the softenings and modifications of modern Papists are brought forward for merely controversial purposes. The schoolmen generally,—including Thomas Aquinas, and some others, who have been even canonized in the Church of Rome,—held that images were to be worshipped with exactly the same species of veneration and homage as the beings whom they represented; that, of course, the images of Christ are to be worshipped as He is, with *latria*, or the supreme worship due to God; the images of the Virgin Mary, as she is, with *hyperdulia;* and images of the saints, as they are, with *dulia*. This principle they openly and explicitly taught as the common doctrine of the church, without being censured by any ecclesiastical authority,—a fact which shows that it was then generally believed and embraced; though it is no doubt true, as Bellarmine says, that it is inconsistent with the decision of the second Œcumenical Council

* *Vide* Voetius, de Theologia Scholastica, (Select. Disput., vol. i., Disp. ii., p. 27).

of Nice, which the Church of Rome is bound by her principles to regard as infallible; and all this has proved very embarrassing to Bellarmine and other Popish controversialists.*

The other fact to which we referred, is in some respects of an opposite description, but equally true in itself, and equally relevant to the object which we have mentioned;—it is this, that the writings of the schoolmen make it manifest that there are some of the doctrines of modern Popery established by the Council of Trent, and therefore binding upon the Church of Rome, which were not generally held during the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. The evidence of this fact has been adduced in a variety of particulars by Protestant controversialists,—and it is peculiarly annoying to their Popish opponents,—but we cannot illustrate it in detail. Nothing can be more certain than that the Popish system was gradually formed, and was not fully completed till the Reformation, or rather till the Council of Trent; and this not by the fair development of what previously existed in germ or embryo, but by inventions and additions unsanctioned by the word of God, and in opposition at once to its particular statements and its general spirit. And the writings of the schoolmen have afforded to Protestants some valuable materials for establishing this important position.

The only persons among the schoolmen with whose writings men who have not special opportunities and most abundant leisure are likely to gain any acquaintance, are Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas,—the former of whom flourished in the twelfth, and the latter in the thirteenth century. Lombard's Four Books of Sentences form, as we have explained, the foundation and the text-book of the scholastic theology; and he himself is commonly known among the schoolmen as the Master of Sentences, or simply the Master. His general object in preparing his Four Books of Sentences, was to give a summary of Christian doctrine as then commonly held by the church, and to establish it from the writings of the fathers, especially Augustine; and in this he was considered to have succeeded so well, that most of the schoolmen just composed commentaries upon his Sentences. His opinions, however, were not universally adopted, though his work is to a considerable extent a compilation; and it is no very un-

* Bellarm., tom. ii., pp. 828–30.

common thing among his numerous commentators to add, after quoting one of his Sentences,—*Hîc* magister non tenetur. His work is of a manageable size. The order of the different topics is a good deal similar to what we find in modern works on systematic theology. The first book treats of God, His attributes, and especially the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; the second, of the works of creation, especially angels and man; the third, of the person and work of Christ (though on this latter point,—the work of Christ,—it is very brief and imperfect), and the standard and rules of moral duty; and the fourth and last, of the sacraments and the government of the church. This arrangement, in its leading features, is not very unlike that adopted in Calvin's Institutes; with these differences, that Lombard divides into two what Calvin embodies in one in his first book, under the title, "De cognitione Dei Creatoris," and that he passes over in the most perfunctory way, or treats as virtually included in the subject of the sacraments, many of the important topics discussed in Calvin's *third* book, under the title, "De modo percipiendæ Christi gratiæ." From what we have had occasion to mention in explaining the views of Augustine, it might be expected that Lombard did not clearly understand, and that he says very little about, the subject of justification, and its connection with the work of Christ as its ground, and with faith as its instrument. Luther, who was accustomed to rail with much severity against the scholastic theology, admits the merit and usefulness, and points out the chief defects, of Lombard's work in the following words: —"Lombardus in conciliatione patrum est diligentissimus, et se longe superior. Nemo ipsum in hoc genere superabit, nullis in conciliis, nullo in patre tantum reperies, quam in libro sententiarum. Nam patres et concilia quosdam tantum articulos tractant, Lombardus autem omnes. Sed in præcipuis illis articulis de fide et justificatione nimis est jejunus, quamquam Dei gratiam magnopere prædicet." * Before leaving Lombard, it is proper to mention that his work contains what may be fairly regarded as a very strong testimony to the deep hold which Presbyterian principles had of the general mind of the church down even to a very late period. After giving an account of the seven orders or ranks of the clergy, according to the common notions of the Papists, he

* Buddæi Isagoge, vol. i., p. 361. Lipsiæ, 1727.

adds the following remarkable statements:—"Cumque omnes spirituales sint et sacri, excellenter tamen canones duos tantum sacros ordines appellari censent. Diaconatus scilicet et presbyteratus, quia hos solos primitiva ecclesia legitur habuisse, et de his solos præceptum Apostoli habemus."*

Thomas Aquinas may be regarded as having exerted, in some respects, a greater influence even than Lombard upon the state of theological science, as he was a man of higher talent, indulged to a much greater extent in discussions and speculations of his own, and has been much more implicitly followed by Popish writers. Even to this day St Thomas is quoted as an oracle by Popish writers on systematic theology, although his authority has greatest weight with them when he is furthest from the truth. His principal work is entitled "Summa Theologiæ;" and as many schoolmen wrote commentaries upon Lombard's Books of Sentences, and were thence called Sententiarii, so not a few of them wrote commentaries upon this work of Aquinas, and were hence called Summistæ. A dispute has been raised as to whether or not this work was really the production of Aquinas, but there does not seem to be any sufficient reason to doubt its genuineness. It is, like Lombard's, a system of theology, and it is divided into three parts. The first treats of the nature of theology, of God and His attributes, and of the Trinity. The second part treats wholly of what is usually called moral theology, and is divided into two portions, the one discussing general questions in Christian morality, and the other particular virtues and vices; and these are usually quoted under the titles of *prima secundæ*, and *secunda secundæ*. The third part treats of the means of attaining to true virtue; and under this general designation includes at once the person and work of Christ, the sacraments,—a topic which Aquinas has very fully and minutely elaborated,—and the government of the church. Aquinas was an Augustinian, and his works contain some sound and important matter in illustration and defence of the doctrines of grace, though he manifested to a much greater extent than Augustine did the corrupting influence of the sacramental principle, now much more fully developed, in perverting the doctrines of the gospel. Augustinianism was not likely to be universally acceptable in an age in which personal piety was at a

* Lombardus, Lib. iv., Dist. 24.

very low ebb; and, accordingly, John Duns Scotus opposed himself to Aquinas, leaning generally to the Pelagian or Arminian side, and was followed in this by a considerable number of the schoolmen. The disputes between the Thomists and the Scotists, as they were called, so far as they turned upon theological questions,—for there were some controversies upon mere metaphysical subjects mixed up with them,—were connected chiefly with the principles of the Augustinian system, and involved to a large extent a discussion of the points afterwards controverted in the Church of Rome between the Dominicans and the Franciscans, between the Jansenists and the Jesuits; and among Protestants, between the Calvinists and the Arminians. And in this great controversy, which will last as long as the carnal mind is enmity against God,—for it is at bottom just a controversy between God and man,—the works of Aquinas afford some useful materials; not so much, indeed, for establishing the truth from the word of God, but for answering the objections of opponents founded upon general considerations of a philosophical or metaphysical kind,—and thus may be said to contribute somewhat to the confirmation and defence of a system of doctrine which is at once clearly set forth in the plain statements of God's word, and is in entire accordance with the dictates of sound philosophy, though very likely to call forth the opposition and enmity of the proud heart of unrenewed men.*

There is a work connected with this subject which a few years ago excited a good deal of interest in the theological world,—viz., Dr Hampden's Bampton Lectures, entitled, "The Scholastic Philosophy, considered in its relation to Christian Theology." This work is undoubtedly highly creditable to the talents and erudition of its author; it is fitted to serve some useful and important purposes, and it certainly affords no sufficient grounds for the charges adduced against it by men who were chiefly influenced by indignation against Dr Hampden's zealous and well-known opposition to Tractarian heresy. The work, however, is one which ought to be read with care and caution, as it is, I think, fitted to exert a somewhat unwholesome and injurious influence upon the minds of young and inexperienced theologians, and to

* For characters of Aquinas, by Erasmus and others, see Buddæi Isagoge, Tom. i., p. 364.

afford to the enemies of evangelical truth materials of which it is easy to make a plausible use. The great leading object of the work is to explain in what ways the philosophical and theological speculations of the schoolmen have influenced the theological opinions of more modern times, and the language and phraseology in which these opinions have been commonly expressed; and in developing this interesting topic, Dr Hampden has brought forward a good deal that is ingenious, true, and useful. But, at the same time, the mode in which he has expounded some of the branches of the subject, has a certain tendency to lead men, who may know nothing more of these matters, to take up the impression, that not only the particular form into which the expositions of Christian doctrine have been thrown, and the language in which they have been embodied, but even the matter or substance of the doctrines themselves, are to be traced to no higher source than the speculations of the schoolmen of the middle ages. There is no ground for asserting that this was the intention of the author, but it is a use which may with some plausibility be made of the materials which he furnishes; and this application of them is certainly not guarded against in the work with the care which might have been expected from one who was duly impressed with the importance of sound views in Christian theology,—a defect, however, which is to a large extent supplied by an elaborate introduction prefixed to the second edition. It is also a defect of this work, and tends rather to increase the danger above adverted to, that it contains nothing whatever in the way of pointing out the advantages that may be derived from the study of scholastic theology, in illustrating and defending the true doctrines of Scripture.

CHAPTER XV.

CANON LAW.

About the same time when Peter Lombard published his Four Books of Sentences, which were the foundation of the scholastic theology,—viz., about the middle of the twelfth century,—Gratian published his Decree (Decretum), called also "Concordia Discordantium Canonum." This work was the foundation of the canon law, the ecclesiastical law of the Church of Rome, which for a long period was much studied, occupied a large share of men's attention, and exerted no small influence upon the condition of the church and the general aspect of theological literature. There had been collections of canons on subjects of ecclesiastical jurisprudence published long before Gratian's time. The most celebrated of these were the "Codex Canonum Ecclesiæ Africanæ," and the "Codex Canonum Ecclesiæ Universalis," both of which were compiled during the fifth century, and embodied most of the canons on matters of discipline which had been passed by any preceding councils. They were added to from time to time, as new canons were passed, and especially after the Quin-Sextine Council, or the council in Trullo, in the end of the seventh century, approved of former canons, and passed a good many more of its own. The progress of the Papal power materially changed both the principles and the practice of ecclesiastical law, and rendered necessary and produced many new canons, and other less formal ecclesiastical regulations. It was only towards the latter part of the eleventh century, during the pontificate of Gregory VII., that the true Papal principles were fully developed,—those principles on which it has been well said that the Church of Rome has ever since acted when she had the power to enforce them, and proclaimed when she had no reason for concealing them. The Pseudo-Isidorian decretals, as they are commonly called,—fabricated about the eighth century in the name of the early Popes,—had now, by the zealous exertions of the Bishops of Rome, and especially of Nicolas I., been generally received as genuine and authoritative, and had contributed greatly to extend and confirm

the usurpations of the Papal See. And many serious encroachments had now been made by the ecclesiastical authorities upon the civil province, though met occasionally, for a time and in particular countries, by as serious encroachments of the civil power upon the ecclesiastical jurisdiction. These circumstances naturally suggested the expediency of compiling a fuller system of ecclesiastical law, adapted to the existing condition of the church; and this, accordingly, was undertaken by Gratian, a monk and professor at Bologna, whose work was received with great applause.

Even after the publication of the Decree of Gratian, additions were made to the rites and ceremonies of the church; and the claims of the Popes to a right of interference in the regulation of all its internal affairs, so far as they thought it for their interest to interfere, were considerably extended. This rendered new canons and regulations necessary; and these, accordingly, were issued, in considerable abundance, by Popes, and by councils acting under their immediate control, during the latter part of the twelfth, the whole of the thirteenth, and the early part of the fourteenth centuries. These were collected, digested under different heads, and published at different periods, by Gregory IX., Clement V., Boniface VIII., and John XXII., chiefly under the name of Decretals, but partly also, in the later and less formal and complete portion of them, under the name of Extravagantes. The Decretals of Gregory IX., in five books; the Sextus, or Sixth, divided also into five books; the Clementine Constitutions, in five books, containing the canons and regulations sanctioned by the Council of Vienne, under Clement V.; the Extravagantes of John XXII.; and the Extravagantes Communes, also in five books, containing the famous bulls of Boniface VIII.,—form, with the Decree of Gratian prefixed to them as the first part of the work, the Corpus Juris Canonici, or the ecclesiastical law of the Church of Rome. The work was completed long before the Reformation, and the whole of this mass of matter was carefully revised and corrected by Gregory XIII., and published by his authority in 1582.

It is to be observed, with respect to what is contained in the Corpus Juris Canonici, that it is only the Decretals, Gregorian and Sextine, the Clementines and Extravagantes, as they are called, which have received the formal and explicit sanction of

the head of the Romish Church, that are to be regarded as being, strictly speaking, and as they stand, ecclesiastical law. The Decree of Gratian was sanctioned by the Popes as the authorized text-book for teaching canon or ecclesiastical law in schools and universities, and thus came practically to have much of the force and authority of law. But it has never been formally sanctioned by the Romish Church, or by the Pope as the head of it, in such a way as to authorize us to assert that everything contained in it may simply, because it is contained there, and irrespective of any authority it may receive from the original source from which it is taken, be held as strictly binding upon the Church of Rome or the Pope. There are perfectly sufficient reasons, as we shall afterwards notice, why the Popes have abstained from giving a formal authoritative sanction to the Decree of Gratian. The Decretals, Clementines, and Extravagantes, are, of course, received implicitly by all Papists who believe in the personal infallibility of the Pope, since all that they contain either emanated directly from Popes speaking *ex cathedra*, or received their explicit and formal sanction as the public and authoritative law of the church. But they are not received implicitly,—or irrespective of some other authority attaching to some portions besides that derived from their having emanated from Popes, or having been sanctioned by them, —by those who hold the principles on which the Gallican liberties are based. The canon law sanctions all the highest and most extravagant claims of the Popes, and their immediate adherents; and some of these the Gallican church maintains to be both unfounded in themselves, and destitute of any such sanction from the church, or from any authority entitled to represent it, as to be binding upon its members. The great body of the canon law, in both parts,—*i.e.*, in the Decree of Gratian, which forms the first part; and in the second part, which consists of the different materials above specified,—and indeed the whole of it, with the exception of the rubrics or titles attached to the different sections, consists of extracts from ecclesiastical authorities of various classes; and Papists, except those who believe in the personal infallibility of the Pope,—and even *these*, in so far as the Decree of Gratian is concerned,—are accustomed to estimate the weight due to its different statements by referring back to the original authority, whatever it might be, from which the particular portion was taken, and do not admit that their mouths are to be shut by the mere

fact of its being found in the "Corpus Juris Canonici." While the Decree of Gratian, or the first part of the canon law, is, upon the grounds now explained, inferior in authority of a strictly legal or forensic kind to the second, it is of much more value and importance, with reference to the ordinary general objects of theological or ecclesiastical study, inasmuch as it exhibits the substance of the law and practice of the church, in so far as concerns government and discipline, from the time of the apostles till the twelfth century.

The Decree of Gratian consists of three parts,—the first being divided into a hundred Distinctions; the second being divided into thirty-six Causes, and the Causes again being subdivided into Questions, and containing under the thirty-sixth Cause a full treatise upon penitence, or the penitential discipline of the church; and the third, treating of consecration (including under this name the administration of the sacraments), and divided into five Distinctions. The materials of which it consists are threefold,—viz., the canons of councils, the dicta of the fathers, and the decrees and decisions of Popes from the earliest times, upon all the leading topics comprehended under the heads of government, worship, and discipline. It thus, independently of its direct and proper character as an exhibition of the system of ecclesiastical jurisprudence which has actually obtained in the church, contains much interesting and valuable matter, bearing upon the subject of ecclesiastical antiquities and ecclesiastical history; though it is right to mention that it is not always safe to trust to the accuracy of Gratian's quotations and historical references, or to the perfect correctness of the rubrics or titles which he prefixes to them, and which are sometimes not fully warranted by the extracts themselves, the substance of which they profess to contain. The contents of the Decree possess intrinsically just the degree of weight or authority that is due to the fathers, popes, and councils, from whom they are taken; but however humble may be the view we may entertain of their weight as authorities in matters of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, this does not affect the value of the materials they contain, as throwing light upon the actual administration and history of the church at different periods.

All who attempt to expound and illustrate the principles of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, profess to lay its foundations upon the word of God; but long before Gratian compiled his Decree, a

huge and elaborate system of ecclesiastical law had been invented, a large portion of which could not be traced even remotely to Scripture, and which seemed as if suited and intended for a society of a different kind from the church of Christ, as represented to us in His own word. In considering the subject of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, it should never be forgotten that the constitution of the church of Christ, its laws and government, were settled by Christ Himself in His word, and cannot be changed or modified by any other or subsequent authority. The first point, therefore, is to ascertain from the study of the Scriptures, what Christ Himself has enacted or sanctioned in regard to the constitution and government of His church, and the way in which its affairs ought to be regulated; and then to discover what general principles He has laid down as to the way in which any power or authority He may have vested in His church, or any portion of it, for the administration of its affairs, is to be exercised. The views which are sanctioned by Scripture upon these points should constitute the basis, and regulate the whole superstructure, of ecclesiastical jurisprudence; and men, in studying this subject, are bound to take care that, in the first place, they understand what the word of God declares or indicates as to the character, objects, and constitution of the kingdom of Christ, the mode in which its affairs ought to be conducted, the office-bearers He has appointed, and the way and manner in which their functions ought to be discharged. There is important information upon all these points given us in Scripture, not indeed drawn out in detail, but embodied in great principles and general rules, which ought never to be disregarded or violated. It is only what is contained in, or may be fairly deduced from, Scripture, that is possessed of anything like authority in the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs; and though ecclesiastical office-bearers are warranted to lay down rules or regulations for securing that those things which Christ has required and appointed to be done, be done decently and in order, it should not be forgotten that the tendency which has been constantly exhibited by the ecclesiastical authorities, and which reached its full development in the canon law, so well adapted to what the National Covenant of Scotland calls the Pope's temporal monarchy and wicked hierarchy, has been to convert their ministerial into a lordly authority,—to assume the place of legislators for Christ's church, as if it were their kingdom and not *His*, as if

they were lords over *His* heritage, entitled to administer its affairs according to their own pleasure, or at least according to their own views of what was best fitted to promote its interests, and to bring its most solemn censures to bear upon men merely for disregarding their despotic commands. Ecclesiastical jurisprudence, as exhibited in its full growth in the canon law, presents a huge mass of unnecessary and lordly legislation, not only unsanctioned by Scripture, but coming altogether in its general character, and independently of specific enactments and provisions, to contradict the whole spirit and scope of scriptural principles, by which the subject ought to be regulated, and to frustrate the object that ought to have been aimed at.

It was to overturn this huge system of unnecessary and lordly legislation in the church of Christ, and to reduce the laws of men to their proper level, that Calvin* and the other Reformers were at so much pains to establish the principle that mere human laws, whether civil or ecclesiastical, do not *per se* bind the conscience. But while this danger ought to be carefully guarded against, this does not affect the lawfulness of a certain ministerial authority competent to ecclesiastical office-bearers, or the importance of the study of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, or the desirableness of knowing what enactments and regulations have been laid down and followed out for the administration of ecclesiastical affairs since the establishment of the church,—the causes that produced them, the grounds on which they were defended, and the influence which they exerted. Everything bearing upon these topics, is not only interesting and valuable historically, but is fitted to afford useful lessons as to the principles and rules by which the affairs of the church ought to be conducted, especially when events of an unusual character and magnitude arise. The Decree of Gratian, exhibiting as it does the substance of the whole legislation of the ecclesiastical authorities from the foundation of the church, presents, of course, a great mass of unnecessary, erroneous, and injurious provisions, while it contains also many traces of its earlier and purer discipline. The Church of Rome has been often subjected to much inconvenience, from its professing to adhere to the original and ancient doctrines, canons, and practices of the church. It was from the necessity of appearing to follow

* Instit., Lib. iv., c. 10.

out this profession that Gratian admitted into his Decree so much of the earlier and purer discipline of the church, though it plainly enough indicated a state of things in regard to church government, and the general regulation of ecclesiastical affairs, very different from that which obtained after the Bishops of Rome had succeeded in erecting their marvellous despotism; and it was for this reason again that the Popes avoided giving to it the formal and explicit sanction of law. There are a considerable number of passages to be found in the first part of the canon law, taken from the earlier fathers and councils, and even from some of the earlier Popes, which afford testimonies and authorities against the laws and practices of the modern Church of Rome, and which have been collected by Protestant writers, and applied in that way. Traces are to be found in the canon law of the ancient comparative soundness of doctrines, in the more limited sense of the word, but it is chiefly on the subject of government and discipline that it treats; and on these points we have embodied in the canon law some important testimonies from early authorities in favour not only of Protestant, but of Presbyterian, principles. It may be worth while to advert to one or two of these.

We have seen that Peter Lombard, in his Four Books of Sentences, bears explicit testimony to this, that the apostolic and primitive church had but two orders of office-bearers,—presbyters and deacons; and we find in the Decree of Gratian an assertion of the identity of bishops and presbyters. In the first part of the Decree* we find inserted two very important passages of Jerome on this point, which are quite sufficient of themselves to overturn the whole argument in favour of Prelacy, in so far as ecclesiastical antiquity is concerned; and we find, moreover, that to one of them (Distinct. 95, c. 5) Gratian himself has attached the following rubric, which, beyond all question, correctly describes the mind of Jerome in the passage quoted: "Presbyter idem est qui Episcopus, ac sola consuetudine præsunt Episcopi Presbyteris." It is also beyond all question certain, that the canon law teaches, as part of the discipline and practice of the early church, the principle of non-intrusion in the only honest sense of it,—in the sense in which *we* hold it. We have the following explicit statements upon this point. The first is from a letter of Pope

* Distinct. 93 and 95.

Cœlestine, addressed to the bishops of Gaul in 428: "Nullus invitis detur episcopus; Cleri, plebis et ordinis consensus et desiderium requirantur,"—where the clergy and the people are put upon the same footing in the election of a bishop, and where not only the "consensus," but the "desiderium" of both is made equally imperative. Where this was law, of course, the opposition of *either* the clergy or the people was in itself a conclusive bar to the appointment of a bishop. Another is taken from a letter addressed by Pope Leo the Great to the bishops of Macedonia, in the year 445. It contains these words: "Si forte vota elegentium in duas se diviserint partes, metropolitani judicio is alteri preferatur qui majoribus et studiis juvatur et meritis, *tantum ut nullus invitis et non petentibus ordinetur*, ne civitas episcopum non optatum aut contemnat aut oderet." When a division arose in the election of a bishop, the metropolitan was to use his influence to effect, if possible, the election of the one who was at once most acceptable and best qualified; but whatever he might do in the matter, there was one thing that was in no case to be tolerated, and that was, that any one should be appointed a bishop unless the people wished and desired him; and the reason assigned for this at once establishes, beyond the reach of question or cavil, the meaning and the reasonableness of the enactment,—viz., lest the people having got a bishop whom they did not like,—"non optatum," whom they never wished for,—should despise him or hate him. These were the views of the Popes of the fifth century, and this of itself warrants us to conclude *a fortiori* that they were the views of the whole church of that period, though the Popes were not then acknowledged as its sovereigns, and also of the preceding ages; and it does give them some additional weight or authority,—*i.e.*, it affords additional evidence that they had been always reckoned fundamental principles of ecclesiastical jurisprudence,—that even in the twelfth century they were inserted in the canon law, and have ever since occupied a place there.

But while the decree of Gratian contains not a little from the earlier councils and fathers that savours of the purer doctrine and discipline of the ancient church, and affords testimonies and authorities against the modern Church of Rome, it also contains a great deal more that is thoroughly imbued with the genuine Popish policy of Gregory VII. and his successors. Gratian constantly quotes as genuine the spurious decretal epistles of the

early Popes. Their insertion in the canon law contributed, on the one hand, to confirm and perpetuate their authority and influence, and, on the other, to secure the patronage of the Popes to Gratian's work. Indeed, Gratian has made it sufficiently evident, that one leading object he aimed at in preparing his Decree,—and, we cannot doubt, that one leading object the Popes had in view in patronizing it,—was to exalt the power and authority of the Papal See, to raise it to supreme and universal dominion. And when to all the matter tending to this object which Gratian in the twelfth century collected, were added the decretals and bulls of a similar tendency of Innocent and Boniface, and the other Popes of the thirteenth, and early part of the fourteenth, century, we need not wonder that the canon law was generally regarded by the Reformers as one of the great engines devised for the promotion of Papal despotism, and well adapted for that purpose; or that Luther, in revenge for the burning of some of his books by the Papal authorities, should have publicly consigned the canon law to the flames, along with the bull which Pope Leo had published against him. He afterwards wrote a treatise to explain the reasons of his conduct in taking this step, and among other things, produced thirty passages from the canon law containing sentiments quite sufficient to justify its being burned. In this work he thus states what he considered to be the sum and substance of the canon law: "Papa est Deus in terris, superior omnibus cœlestibus, terrenis, spiritualibus et secularibus. Et omnia papæ sunt propria, cui nemo audeat dicere: quid facis?" He admits that there are some good things in the canon law, especially in the first part of it, the Decree of Gratian: "Quod si in illis etiam aliquid boni inesset, ut de decretis fateri cogor, totum tamen eo detortum est, ut noceat, et papam in suâ antichristianâ et impia tyrannide confirmet;" and then he adds the following observation, which is important in connection with some of the extracts we have given from it: "Omitto, quod nihil eorum præ nimia diligentia observatur, nisi quod malum et noxium est, servasse." * Still the canon law, and especially the canons of the ancient councils which are embodied in the first part of it, has formed the basis of the ecclesiastical law, even of Protestant churches, pointing out what were the topics on which it was

* Buddæi Isagoge, p. 781.

found that enactments and regulations were needed in the administration of the affairs of the church, and affording some assistance in deciding what these regulations should be, and how they ought to be modified and applied,—as well as throwing much light upon the condition and history of the church at the periods to which its different portions relate. On all these grounds, the study of it is deserving of *some* time and attention from those who desire to be thoroughly acquainted with the history of the church, and with the different leading departments of ecclesiastical literature. If ecclesiastical jurisprudence is to be studied, then the canon law, which is the basis of it, and which contains a full collection of all the principal materials out of which this department of theological science has been constructed, must receive some degree of attention. The reasons for giving some degree of attention to the study of the canon law, are thus put by Buddæus with his usual judgment and good sense: "De jure canonico aliter protestantes, romanæ ecclesiæ addictos aliter sentire, res ipsa itidem docet. Nulla autem, aut exigua ejus apud protestantes cum sit auctoritas, non omni tamen ideo apud eos destituitur usu. Præterquam enim, quod in foris adhuc quodammodo obtineat; et ad indolem papatus eo rectius introspiciendam plurimum confert, et antiquitatis ecclesiasticæ studio inservit, cumprimis varia, eaque interdum egregia veritatis testimonia, contra ecclesiæ romanæ errores nobis suppeditat."*

There is a class of writers† who have given much attention to the study of ecclesiastical jurisprudence and the canon law, who have been in the habit of alleging and labouring to prove that it is only from the canon law that the idea of a distinct and independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction, not subject to civil control, has been derived; and that it was through this channel that it found its way into the Protestant churches. This, of course, is just one mode of putting the charge which we formerly examined and exposed,—viz., that the scriptural Presbyterian principle of a distinct government and jurisdiction in the church, independent of civil control, is a Popish doctrine; and with the truth or falsehood of that general charge must this particular allegation stand or fall. The canon law and the practice of the Church of Rome certainly present ecclesiastical jurisdiction in a very odious and offensive

* Buddæi Isagoge, p. 848. † Thomasius and Boehmer.

aspect; but there is no great difficulty in drawing a clear line of demarcation between Presbyterian and Popish principles upon this subject, and preserving in theory at least,—though experience seems to indicate that the practice is not quite so easy,—both to the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, their own proper province, and their own separate jurisdiction. The civil magistrate,—meaning thereby, the supreme civil power, in whomsoever vested,—has assuredly all that he is entitled to, when he has absolute control, under God, and without the intervention of any human authority claiming jurisdiction in the matter, over the persons and the property of all men, ecclesiastics equally with the rest of his subjects. The consciences of men and the church of Christ are not subject to his jurisdiction; over them he not only is not entitled, but is not at liberty, to claim or to exercise any authoritative control. "God alone," says our Confession of Faith, "is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His word or beside it, in matters of faith or worship." The conscience,—that is, the convictions which men entertain as to what they ought to believe and do in all matters of religion and morality,—is subject to God alone, and to be guided only by His word. The church of Christ, the other great province excluded from the jurisdiction of the civil power, is to a large extent comprehended under the general head of conscience, where there is no room for the authoritative interference of any human power, civil or ecclesiastical, inasmuch as men's duties as office-bearers and members of the church should be regulated only by the word of God, and their own conscientious convictions as to what His mind and will is. But the church of Christ is also a visible society, which has outward and visible business to administer, and in which certain visible and outward processes must be continually going on; such, for instance, as the admission of men to office and to membership, and the retaining them in, or removing them from, the outward privileges attaching to these positions. Where such processes are going on, there must be some provision for determining the questions which are certain to arise; and from the very nature of the case, the decision of them must necessarily assume something more or less of a judicial or forensic character. And the whole controversy virtually comes to this: Are these questions, and questions such as these,—which must arise wherever a church of Christ exists

and is in full operation, and the decision of which is necessary in the transaction of its ordinary business as a visible society,—to be determined by the word of God, or by the law of the land? Are they to be ultimately decided, so far as human power can decide them, by ecclesiastical office-bearers or by civil functionaries? No particular doctrine as to the spiritual effects of ordination and admission to ordinances, on the one hand; or of deposition and excommunication, upon the other, at all affects this question. They are viewed here and in this connection simply as an act of outward jurisdiction *in foro exteriori;* and the question is, By what standard and by what parties are these points to be ultimately decided? And here there is really no medium between, on the one hand, assigning to the church as a distinct independent society,—or, upon Presbyterian principles, to ecclesiastical office-bearers,—a right of regulating its own affairs, managing all its own necessary business according to the word of God; and, on the other, depriving it of all judicial or forensic authority even in these matters, except what is derived from the State, and subject to civil control,—thus reducing it to the level of a corporation, which ordinarily indeed, and when no dispute arises, may be allowed to manage its own affairs according to its own rules, but from whose decisions there is always open an appeal to the ordinary civil tribunals as to a higher authority.

While these principles, when fully acted on, secure to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities their own separate provinces, and their own independent jurisdiction according to the word of God, the rights of conscience are secured within the church itself by an honest and faithful adherence to the great scriptural principle which, in the Church of Rome and in the canon law, is trampled under foot,—viz., that church power is not lordly, but only ministerial; that ecclesiastical office-bearers, even within their own province, have no right to be making laws or pronouncing decisions, merely according to their own judgment and discretion, but that they should do nothing in these matters except what the word of God requires them to do in the discharge of the necessary duties of their place, and are bound to do it all according to the standard which Christ has prescribed, their decisions being entitled to respect and obedience only if consonant to the word of God; and all men, civil rulers and private individuals, being not only entitled, but bound, to judge for themselves, with a view to the

regulation of their own conduct, and upon their own responsibility, whether they are so or not.

The substance of the whole matter is this: The conscience of men, as comprehending all that they are bound to believe and to do in matters of religion and morality, whether as concerning things civil or things ecclesiastical, is subject to God alone, no human power having any jurisdiction or authoritative control over it. The province of the civil magistrate comprehends the persons and the properties of his subjects; over these in the case of all his subjects, and even although in particular cases they may be mixed up with ecclesiastical matters, he has supreme jurisdiction, being subject to God only, and not to any human power. The province of the ecclesiastical authorities is the administration of the ordinary necessary business of the church as a distinct visible society, the regulation and execution, according to the word of God, of the functions that must be discharged, and of the work that must be done, wherever Christ has an organized church in full operation,—consisting chiefly, in all ordinary circumstances, of admitting to, and excluding from, the possession of office and the enjoyment of outward privileges in that society. And as neither the civil nor the ecclesiastical authorities have any direct jurisdiction within the other's province, so neither is entitled indirectly to extend its authority beyond its own. The power of the civil magistrate is lordly; in other words, God, his only superior, not having prescribed a constitution and laws for states, civil rulers have a large measure of discretion in regulating national affairs as may seem most expedient, and may thus, if they choose, attach certain civil consequences to ecclesiastical decisions. Ecclesiastical jurisdiction, besides being restricted to ecclesiastical matters,—*i.e.*, to those things which constitute the ordinary necessary business of Christ's visible church,—is, even in regard to these things, purely ministerial; there is no room for discretion, it *must* be regulated solely by the word. And this principle, when fairly and honestly acted upon, and not employed—as it has always been in the Romish Church—as a pretence for unwarranted usurpations upon the civil power, or depriving it of its just rights, necessarily excludes all compromise,—all deference whatever to civil interference as affecting either directly or indirectly the settlement of ecclesiastical questions, the admission of men to office or to ordinances in the church of Christ.

CHAPTER XVI.

WITNESSES FOR THE TRUTH DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

THERE is a subject, partly historical and partly doctrinal, that has occupied a good deal of attention in the controversy between Protestants and the Church of Rome, to which it may be proper, at this point, to advert. We refer to the opposition made by individuals or churches, during the middle ages, to the Church of Rome; or the inconsistency between their doctrines and those of modern Papists, and the use or application made of this, either in evidence or in argument. The general subject, thus stated, comprehends a considerable number of important topics which have been discussed with great fulness of detail, but to which we can only very briefly refer.

Papists have been accustomed to assert that the doctrines now held by them have been all along maintained by the great body of the church, in unbroken succession, from the time of the apostles downwards; and they have laboured to show that whenever any man or body of men adopted any opposite doctrines, they were in consequence condemned and rejected by the church in general as heretics, or, at least, schismatics. Upon the ground of an allegation to this effect, they found a claim in behalf of the Church of Rome to be regarded as the one church of Christ, with which He has been ever present since He ascended up on high, preserving it from all error, and maintaining it as the pillar and ground of the truth; while, on the same ground, they adduce it as an argument against Protestantism, that it had no existence before the time of Luther, who broke in upon the cordial harmony with which, it is said, the whole Christian world was then, and had for many ages been, receiving the doctrine and submitting to the authority of the Roman Church.

We have said enough, formerly, to show how futile is the claim put forth by the Church of Rome to apostolicity, as imply-

ing the maintenance of the doctrine of the apostles handed down in unbroken succession from their time; and how utterly unknown, for several centuries, was the notion that the Church of Rome was the catholic church of Christ, or that it was necessary to be in communion with the Bishop of Rome in order to be regarded as a part of the catholic church. Protestants do not admit, of course, that there is any necessity to point out and ascertain the time and circumstances in which any particular doctrine or practice was first introduced into the church, in order to prove that it did not descend from apostolic times. We are warned in Scripture that heresies would come in privily, that the tares would be sown while men slept; and it is a fundamental principle of Protestantism, which, when once established upon its own proper evidence, must never be rejected or forgotten, that it is by the Bible alone that we can certainly determine what is true and what is false in religion; and that there is not, and cannot be, any obligation to receive anything as apostolic, unless it be either contained in, or deducible from, the apostolic writings. Still, though it is *ex abundanti*, Protestant writers have undertaken to show, and have shown, the origin and growth of many of the peculiarities of Popery,—have brought out fully the time and circumstances in which they were invented; and even in cases in which there may not be sufficient historical materials to enable them to do this with exactness and certainty, they have, at least, been able to fix upon a particular period at which they have found that some specific doctrine now held by the Church of Rome was not generally believed by the Christian church, and thus to cut off its connection with the apostolic age. It is true that some of the germs or rudiments of modern Popery can be traced further back in the history of the church, than some of those Protestant writers who have been largely imbued with veneration for antiquity, especially among Episcopalians, have been willing to allow. But it is certain that very scanty traces of any of them can be found during the first three centuries, that most of them were then not held by the church in general, and that many of them were the inventions of a later period.

As Papists lay much stress upon the consideration, that if any innovation in doctrine and practice had been introduced it would have met with opposition, and that this opposition would have excited attention, and thereby have produced some historical

memorials, by which it might be shown to be an innovation; some Protestant writers, though denying the soundness of this general principle as a certain test or standard, have made it a specific object to trace minutely in the history of the church, as far as there are materials for doing so, the opposition made at the time to all the innovations and growing pretensions of the Popes. There is one important and valuable work which is directed specifically to this object, and follows throughout this simple plan, embodying, in the prosecution of it, a great deal of important historical information. I mean the celebrated Mornay du Plessis' work, entitled "Mysterium iniquitatis, seu historia Papatus." The leading object of this work is stated in the title to be to show "quibus gradibus ad id fastigii enisus sit (Papatus), quamque acriter omni tempore ubique a piis contra intercessum." The work contains a history of the innovations introduced by the Romish Church, and of the claims or pretensions to authority and supremacy advanced by the Popes from the controversy about Easter in the second century, till the time of the Reformation; followed by an account of the opposition which each met with, and the difficulties that had to be overcome, before it was generally received or submitted to. Much of this, however, belongs to an earlier period in the history of the church, which we have already considered. We have to do now only with the period which succeeded the general adoption of some of the peculiarities of modern Popery, and the subjugation of almost all the Western Church to the Bishops of Rome.

Many Protestant writers have placed the commencement of the reign of antichrist about the beginning of the seventh century, and have fixed upon this era, on the ground that though some of the principal corruptions of modern Popery had not then received the sanction of the church, yet that many of them were generally prevalent, though not in all cases very fully developed; and that about that time claims to supremacy over the whole church were put forth by the Popes, and were in the Western Church pretty generally acknowledged and submitted to. It is certain that, from this period till the Reformation, the Western Church was almost wholly under the control of the Bishops of Rome, and that those who dissented from their doctrines, and set themselves in opposition to their supremacy, were treated by them, and by all who acknowledged their sway, as heretics and schismatics. Popish

writers dwell with great complacency upon this period in the history of the church, when nearly all the Western Church submitted to the Popes, and when any opposition to their impositions and exactions was visited not only with spiritual censures, but also frequently with civil pains and penalties, and sometimes with exterminating persecutions. Protestants think that in the Church of Rome, during this dark and dreary period, they can see, in the light of Scripture, plain traces, both in the doctrines taught and in the practices adopted, of the predicted apostasy, of the great antichrist, the man of sin and son of perdition. And, of course, the proof of *this* from Scripture is quite a sufficient answer to all the presumptions which the Papists found upon the general prevalence of their system of doctrine and polity for a long period antecedent to the Reformation, and upon the alleged non-existence of Protestantism before the time of Luther. Still they have also contended that a careful investigation of the history and literature of that period affords many materials of a more specific kind for attacking Popery and for defending Protestantism.

The leading positions which Protestant writers have maintained and established upon this subject are these,—first, that down till the period of the Reformation there continued to exist in the formularies, symbolical books, and other standard works of public authority or in general use in the Church of Rome, traces of a more ancient system of doctrine and discipline different from what now obtains in that communion, and thus affording testimonies against the innovations which she has introduced; and that down till the time of Luther there is a series of writers, who, though living and dying in the communion of the Church of Rome, differed in some points of doctrine from modern Papists, and agreed with Protestants;—evidence being thus afforded, that the modern Romish profession, established and made perpetual and unchangeable by the Council of Trent after the Reformation, had not been universally adopted *in all its parts*, or at least was not obligatory, when Luther appeared; and, secondly, that those who, from the time when the Roman Church gained an ascendancy over the West, were generally stigmatized and persecuted as heretics and schismatics, held to a large extent Protestant doctrines; and that though, upon Protestant principles, their claim to be regarded as witnesses for the truth must be decided in every instance by ascertaining the accordance of their views with the

word of God, yet that, even independently of this, there is much about their general character and history which affords strong presumptions at least that they were right, and the Church of Rome wrong,—and that, consequently, the scriptural doctrines of Protestants have been held and advocated even in the darkest and most corrupt times.

As an instance of what is commonly adduced in support of the first part of the first of these two positions, I may refer to the well-known and interesting fact, that in the Council of Trent a proposal was made that some things in the Pontifical,—or the authorized directory for ordination, as it might be called,—should be omitted, since they manifestly countenanced the right of the people to a real voice and influence in the appointment of their pastors, in accordance with the unquestionable practice of the primitive church, and thus only afforded a handle to heretics,—*i.e.*, to the Reformers,—who had restored the primitive usage, which of course had been long abandoned in the Church of Rome. I may also refer to the curious and important fact, that even the canon of the mass, as it is called, or the authorized service for celebrating mass, and which the Council of Trent forbade any under pain of anathema to charge with containing any errors, does, while it unquestionably exhibits many gross errors, contain also some statements handed down from purer and more ancient times, which cannot be easily reconciled with some of the modern Popish doctrines upon the subject. With respect to the second part of the first position,—viz., that there was a series of writers in the communion of the Church of Rome down till the period of Reformation, who did not believe in all the modern Popish doctrines, and who, in opposition to these, held some one or more of the doctrines generally taught by Protestants,—the evidence of it could be exhibited only by a series of quotations; and this would require much more space than can be allotted to it. I can therefore only say in general, that a good deal that is curious and very decidedly opposed to the common Popish allegations as to their unvarying unity and harmony,—though, as is the case in most disputes, the settlement of which depends upon an examination of the exact meaning of a number of quotations, leading into some intricate and perplexed discussions,—has been produced by Protestant writers; and mention some of the authors where a collection of these materials may be found.

Among the fullest repositories of materials of this sort in our language are Bishop Morton's "Catholike Appeale for Protestants, out of the confessions of the Romane Doctors," and the appendix to the third book of Field's work on "The Church." But the fullest and most complete work upon this subject is the "Confessio Catholica" of John Gerhard, a celebrated and very learned divine of the Lutheran church. The appendix to the third book of Field on the church is directed to the object of establishing the following bold and startling position: "That the Latin or Western Church, in which the Pope tyrannized, was, and continued, a true, orthodox, and Protestant church; and that the devisers and maintainers of Romish errors and superstitious abuses were only a faction in the same, at the time when Luther, not without the applause of all good men, published his propositions against the profane abuses of Papal indulgences." This general position is monstrously extravagant, and palpably inconsistent with notorious facts. It is too much for any man calling himself a Protestant to maintain that the Church of Rome was a true orthodox Protestant church when Luther appeared,—after one œcumenical council—the second of Nice—had established image-worship; another—the fourth great Lateran—had established transubstantiation, and the absolute necessity of auricular confession to the forgiveness of all mortal sins; and, thirdly, the Council of Florence in 1439 had established purgatory, and the supremacy of the Pope over the whole church of Christ. It is, indeed, a position of some importance,—which many Protestants have laboured to prove, and have proved,—that the system of modern Popery, with all its high pretensions to apostolicity and universality, was not fully completed in all its points till the Council of Trent; that there are several doctrines which, by the decrees of that council, are made imperatively binding upon all the adherents of the Church of Rome, the belief of which had not been previously exacted, and with respect to which different opinions, —some of them substantially Protestant,—were actually professed and tolerated within the Romish communion. This is true, and has been proved. It is of some importance in the Popish controversy, when viewed in connection with the ordinary Popish allegations and pretensions. But it is a very different thing to say that, up till the commencement of the Reformation, the Latin or Western Church was orthodox and Protestant. Field, who was

a man of great learning, has produced much curious and valuable matter that *does* establish the first of these positions, but he has certainly not established the position he undertook to prove.

It is not surprising that this part of Field's work is high in favour with the Tractarians. Field's position is in full harmony with their views; and, could it be made out, would free them from some of the difficulties which they feel in defending, upon their High Church principles, their non-connection with the Church of Rome. The difficulty which, before some of them joined the Church of Rome, they had,—and which those of them who have not yet found it convenient to follow out their principles to their legitimate consequences, and to leave the Church of England, still have,—is to defend the Reformation, and the position of the members of the Reformed churches, from the charge of schism, since the Church of Rome had, they admit, a true apostolical succession, a legitimate authority, and taught at that time no very serious error. Some of them laboured to prove that the Reformers did not leave the Church of Rome, but were expelled from it, and were therefore not responsible for their state of separation. This, however, was not very satisfactory, since the Reformers, by the views which they *embraced*, afforded fair ground to the Church of Rome, *if it was possessed of legitimate authority, and had the same profession as it now has*, to expel them. But if, as Field labours to show, what is now the Church of Rome, so far as doctrinal profession is concerned, was, at the time when Luther appeared, but a mere faction within it,—which afterwards, indeed, acquired an ascendancy at the Council of Trent,—then the Reformers did not leave a church at all, or depart from a settled and legitimate communion, but merely adhered to, or rather themselves constituted and continued to be, the soundest portion of an existing orthodox church.

It is proper to mention that Field is not in general, and upon other topics, a supporter of High Church principles. He holds very moderate and reasonable views upon the subject of the distinction of bishops and presbyters, and would not have scrupled to concur in Archbishop Usher's Reduction of Episcopacy; and he maintains and proves that non-intrusion was the doctrine and practice of the primitive church. It is also fair to Field to state that the appendix to his third book, which has chiefly procured for him the favour of Tractarians, and has thereby led to a recent

republication of his work, which had become very scarce, was not published till after his death; and that suspicions have been entertained that it was not written by him, but got up under the influence of Archbishop Laud.*

Sec. I.—*Perpetuity and Visibility of the Church.*

The second position which we mentioned as maintained by Protestant writers,—viz., that among these individuals and bodies of men who, from the rise of antichrist to the Reformation, were stigmatized and persecuted by the Church of Rome as heretics and schismatics, there was a series or succession of persons who held in the main scriptural Protestant principles, and are therefore to be regarded as witnesses for the truth,—leads into a still wider, and, in some respects, more intricate field of discussion. Many topics coming under this general head have been controverted between Protestants and Papists, which, as historical questions, are involved in very considerable doubts and difficulties, and are also interwoven with some doctrinal questions of importance concerning the succession, the perpetuity, and visibility of the church, viewed in connection with Christ's promises. The common Popish allegations upon this subject are these,—that for many centuries before Luther's time, the Church of Rome was, as it were, in possession of the world, as the one catholic church of Christ, and that Protestantism had no existence until it was invented in the beginning of the sixteenth century. They further contend, as a doctrinal or scriptural principle, that Christ has promised, and of course has secured, that He will always have on earth, in unbroken and perpetual succession, a visible organized church, maintaining His truth; and that the application of this scriptural or doctrinal principle excludes all claim upon the part of Protestants to be regarded as churches of Christ, and establishes the claim of the Church of Rome as the only catholic church.

I had occasion formerly to explain the import and bearing of Christ's promises, viewed in connection with the history of the

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* Baillie's "Ladensium Autocatacrisis," p. 103. Baxter's Safe Religion, p. 373. Baillie states this suspicion, while Baxter fully approves of what is ascribed to Field.

church, and will not now dwell upon this subject as a doctrinal question, but rather advert briefly to some of the historical questions which have been discussed in connection with it. The claim set up by the Church of Rome of being, as it were, in possession of the world as the one catholic church of Christ for many centuries before the Reformation, is refuted by plain and palpable facts, and especially by the existence of the Greek Church, and other churches in the eastern part of the world. The Greek Church stands, at least, upon a level with the Latin Church with respect to an unbroken visible succession of functionaries and ordinances, to which Papists and other High Churchmen attach so much importance. The Greek has, at least, as good a claim as the Latin Church to a regular visible succession of office-bearers, and of outward organization, from the time of the apostles to the Reformation, and indeed to the present day; and if she is to be deprived of her position and status as a portion of the catholic church of Christ, upon Popish or High Church principles, it can be only by establishing against her the charge of heresy or schism. Accordingly, Popish controversialists have adduced these charges against her, while some Protestant writers have laboured to show that, at least upon Popish principles, the charge cannot be established. If Scripture be adopted as the standard, some very serious errors, in matters both of doctrine and practice, can be established against the Greek Church; but not quite so serious an amount of error as can be established, by the same standard, against the Church of Rome. And if we are to be guided in this matter by some general regard to the views and practice of the early church, then it is quite certain that the Greek Church is more conformed to the primitive standard than the Roman. Indeed, the Greek Church may be said to have retained in her public profession, with a considerable measure of accuracy, and still to possess, what was reckoned orthodoxy in the fourth and fifth centuries, with the exception of adopting the decrees of the infamous second Council of Nice. And even in regard to this subject, her guilt is less than that of the Church of Rome, as she does not require from her subjects the maintenance of any particular views, or the adoption of any particular practices, in regard to the worship of images or pictures. Whether tried, then, by the standard of Scripture or of the early church, the Greek Church is far less corrupt than the Latin; and, except upon the assumption that the Bishops of Rome

are, *jure divino*, the monarchs of the whole church, and warranted to exclude from its pale, as they think proper, is better entitled than the Popish to be regarded as a portion of the catholic church of Christ. The main ground on which the Papists charge the Greek Church with heresy, is their denial of the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son as well as from the Father; and on this point Protestants generally agree with Papists in thinking the Greek Church to be in error. But they usually maintain that this error is not such a heresy as to invalidate any claim she might otherwise have to be regarded as a portion of the catholic church. The fact that the Latins have excommunicated the Greeks, is no sufficient proof that the latter are schismatics.

On these grounds, it is manifest that the claim set up by the Roman Church to be regarded as having been virtually in possession of the Christian world for many centuries before the Reformation, as the whole catholic church of Christ, is altogether destitute of foundation. Whatever claims of this kind may be put forth by the Roman Church, may, with at least equal plausibility, be advanced by the Greek Church. The existence of the Greek Church, possessed of an unbroken visible succession of functionaries and of outward organization from the apostles' times, has been employed with good effect by Protestant writers in their discussions with Papists about the succession and perpetuity of the church, though it cannot be said, in this application of it, to rise above the dignity of an *argumentum ad hominem*. It exposes the claim which the Papists are accustomed to adduce in opposition to the Protestants, to the possession of the world as the catholic church antecedent to the Reformation. And it has somewhat affected the way in which the discussion of the general topic of an unbroken visible succession, as an alleged mark of the true church, has been conducted. Some Papists, anxious to avoid a strict investigation into the subject of the purity and apostolicity of doctrine,—the *only thing of fundamental importance* in estimating the character and claims of any professed church,—have been disposed to make an unbroken visible succession of outward organization from the apostles' times a sufficient proof by itself of purity and orthodoxy, and of a title to all the alleged rights of the catholic church, or a portion of it. But the case of the Greek Church, adduced in argument by the Protestants, com-

pelled them to abandon this extreme view, and to content themselves with maintaining that an unbroken visible succession is but a *sine qua non* of a well-founded claim to orthodoxy and legitimate authority; the want of which disproves the claim, but the possession of which is not of itself sufficient to establish it. The Reformers did not admit the necessity of an outward visible succession even for this limited object, and uniformly maintained that it was quite enough at any time for any professing church to prove, by any competent means,—first, that it held the doctrine taught, and maintained the discipline established, by Christ and His apostles; and, secondly, that it had not presumptuously and contemptuously departed from the external arrangements which had the sanction of Scripture. This is one of the leading general principles on which the defence of the Reformation is founded; but we are not called upon to discuss it further.

Protestants, however, while resting their defence of the Reformation upon this important general principle, have taken some pains to bring out historically the succession and perpetuity of Protestant, as opposed to Popish, doctrine. It is an important and interesting object to trace the history of doctrine and practice in the visible church, independently of any strictly argumentative or controversial purpose to which the result of the investigation may be applied. It is an act of justice to vindicate the character of those whom the apostate Church of Rome stigmatized and persecuted as heretics and schismatics; and in investigating their character and doctrines, Protestant writers have brought out much that is fitted to expose Popish taunts and objections, and to afford some confirmation to Protestant truth. This is the object aimed at, and these are the principal topics involved, in the investigation of the history and opinions of those men who, during the middle ages, were excommunicated and persecuted by the Church of Rome as heretics and schismatics, but who have been generally regarded by Protestants as witnesses for the truth,—as maintaining and preserving, amid abounding corruption and iniquity, the succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine. Most of the facts and arguments connected with this subject have been brought to bear upon the history of the Waldenses and the Albigenses, and especially of the former (for they should not be confounded with each other); some Protestant writers having been of opinion that

the history of the Waldenses could be traced, and that they could be proved to have preserved the succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine and practice, uncorrupted by the great prevailing apostasy, from the fourth century till the Reformation; and all of them holding that the Waldenses present a much fuller and more continuous exhibition of a profession of Protestant anti-Popish doctrine during the middle ages than any other single people with whose history we are acquainted. Mosheim complains that the history of these topics has never been written with perfect impartiality, and perhaps the complaint is not altogether destitute of foundation. The historical facts of the case, and the application of the different and opposite views of Protestants and Papists concerning the doctrine of the succession, perpetuity, and visibility of the church of Christ, are so closely interwoven with each other, that there is more than ordinary difficulty in maintaining perfect impartiality in the historical investigation, even on the part of those who are in the main in the right. It must also be admitted that some Protestant writers have taken higher ground themselves, and made larger concessions to Papists, on the general subject of an unbroken visible succession of doctrine than the word of God and the promises of Christ required; and have thus felt themselves constrained to undertake to establish more by historical evidence than the facts of the case can be shown to warrant.

Sec. II.—*Waldenses and Albigenses.*

From a regard to various useful and important objects, Protestant writers have justly considered it a matter of much importance to trace the succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine, both within and without the pale of the Roman Church, during the dark and dreary period of the middle ages. They have, accordingly, established a succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine, in opposition to the doctrine of the Church of Rome, chiefly through Claude, Bishop of Turin, the Paulicians, the Cathari, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, Wickliffe, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, the Bohemian Brethren, and other witnesses for the truth, down till the period of the Reformation. Several works have been prepared by Protestant writers, embodying the testimonies of these witnesses for the truth, in opposition to the doctrines, practices, and claims of the Bishops of Rome. Perhaps the most

complete work devoted to this single object is the "Catalogus Testium Veritatis," by Flacius Illyricus, the principal author of the Centuries of Magdeburg, the first great work on ecclesiastical history. His testimonies, however, extend over a much wider space of time than that with which we are at present concerned, as he begins, in adducing his witnesses against the Papacy, with the apostle Peter, and brings forward thereafter a great deal of curious matter from a great variety of authors spread over nearly fifteen hundred years.

There are very considerable difficulties in ascertaining accurately the doctrinal views of some of these alleged witnesses for the truth during the middle ages, as in most cases we have scarcely any means of knowing what they believed and taught, except from Popish writers, their enemies and persecutors; and we may be pretty confident that the men who murdered them would not scruple to calumniate them. Still there is enough to satisfy us that those individuals and bodies of men whom we have mentioned were not only zealous opponents of the Papacy, were not only innocent of the charges which Popish writers have adduced against them, but that they held, in the main, the great principles of scriptural Protestant truth, and manifested by their lives and by their deaths,—inflicted by the Church of Rome, and endured by them just because of their faithful adherence to these principles, —that they feared God, that they loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they enjoyed the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit.

Some Protestant writers have been of opinion that Christ's promises necessarily imply that there must always be a visible organized church on earth, preserving in unbroken succession the substance of apostolic doctrine. Of course those who take this view of the import of our Lord's promises concede that they are bound,—if they still mean honestly to maintain the Protestant cause instead of betraying it, as the Tractarians do,—to produce some visible church distinct from the Church of Rome, which has preserved from apostolic times the succession of apostolic doctrine. This concession is attended with considerable responsibility, for it is not easy to make out clearly and satisfactorily by historical evidence the condition which it imposes. The Greek Church certainly contrasts favourably in some respects with the Roman, and, so far as its public profession is concerned, is far from being to the same extent corrupted. But while Protestant

writers formerly have not scrupled to employ the Greek Church against the Romanists, on the footing of an *argumentum ad hominem*, and have done so with good effect, they have not in general thought it warrantable or safe to found upon it in this argument directly and in their own name, as it were, and *ex veritate rei*, chiefly because of its adoption of the decrees of the second Council of Nice in regard to image-worship. Accordingly, those Protestants who have conceded the necessity, in order to the fulfilment of Christ's promises, of the constant existence on earth of some one visible church, holding in unbroken succession the substance of apostolic Protestant doctrine, have usually produced the Waldenses and Albigenses, as fully satisfying the conditions of the argument on the ground on which *they* are disposed to maintain it. Of course they are bound to prove that these bodies have subsisted as churches from a period antecedent to the rise of antichrist, down to the period of the Reformation, preserving during all this time the succession of the substance of apostolic Protestant doctrine in opposition to Popery; and thus connecting the early church, before it had become grossly corrupt in point of doctrine, with the era of the Reformers. This is rather an arduous task, and it is not by any means certain that the fact alleged has ever been thoroughly established by satisfactory historical evidence. When Papists have succeeded in getting any Protestant writers to concede the necessity of an unbroken succession of apostolic doctrine, maintained by a visible church, and find that the case which they generally select is that of the Waldenses and Albigenses, they then bend their whole strength to prove that the condition is not fulfilled in the actual history of these bodies; and it cannot be reasonably disputed that they have contrived to involve the subject, as a question of historical evidence, in very considerable difficulties.

Protestant writers have certainly succeeded in vindicating the Albigenses and the Waldenses of the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and following centuries from the calumnies which Popish writers have adduced against them, and have shown that their doctrines, from the twelfth century downwards, were substantially those now held by the Protestant churches. They have also shown that these bodies existed at an earlier period than that to which Papists commonly ascribe their origin, and they have even made it highly probable that the Waldenses subsisted from the time of

Claude, Bishop of Turin, in the ninth century; but it is not by any means so clear that they have succeeded in carrying the succession through them, by any satisfactory historical evidence, from the ninth century upwards into the period when the church is generally regarded by Protestants as not having become fatally corrupted in point of doctrine. A pretty full view of the historical positions usually maintained by Papists upon this subject, is to be found in the eleventh book of Bossuet's "History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches," and it is against this that the labours of subsequent Protestant writers have been chiefly directed. Indeed, Faber's "Inquiry into the History and Theology of the ancient Vallenses and Albigenses," published in 1838, is just formally an answer to that part of Bossuet's celebrated work, viewed in connection with the notions of the import of Christ's promises generally entertained by Papists, and expounded and applied by Bossuet in the fifteenth or last book of his work. Faber is one of those authors who, though thoroughly and cordially anti-Popish and anti-Tractarian, is yet so much of a High Churchman as to concede that Christ's promises imply the necessity of the constant and uninterrupted existence upon earth of a visible organized church, holding the substance of apostolic doctrine; and he adduces the Albigenses and the Waldenses, or Vallenses, as he calls them, as satisfying this condition. He has brought very considerable ingenuity and learning to bear upon the establishment of his position, and he has thoroughly disproved many of Bossuet's leading allegations. But I am not satisfied that he has established the precise point which he undertook to prove, although he has been bold and rash enough to stake upon the proof of it the whole cause of Protestantism, in so far as it is involved in the real meaning and application of our Lord's promises to His church.

The leading historical positions maintained upon this subject by Bossuet and other Papists are these:—First, that the Albigenses and Waldenses were two sects entirely different from each other in their origin, their location, their doctrine, and their character; secondly, that the Albigenses, settled chiefly in the south-east provinces of France, were the descendants of the Paulicians who came from the East, and were, like them, Manichæans, and that consequently they cannot be regarded even by Protestants as preserving the succession of apostolic doctrine; thirdly, that the sect

of the Waldenses originated with Peter Waldo, or Waldus, of Lyons, about the middle of the twelfth century, and had no existence before that period; and, fourthly, that these Waldenses, from their origin in the twelfth century down till the Reformation,—during the greatest part of which period they dwelt where they still do, in the valleys of the Cottian Alps,—were rather schismatics than heretics, separating from the church, like the ancient Novatians and Donatists, rather on questions of discipline than of doctrine; that on all the leading points of doctrine, especially in regard to the Eucharist, they held the views of the Church of Rome, and cannot therefore be consistently adduced by Protestants as maintaining and preserving the succession of apostolic doctrine.

With respect to the first of these positions, it is generally conceded by Protestant writers that the Waldenses and Albigenses were different sects, though they are often in popular usage confounded or identified with each other. The concession of this point, however, does not materially advance the Popish argument. The other three positions have been all disputed by Protestant writers, and we think that, upon the whole, they have been disproved; but, as we have already indicated, we do not regard all this as sufficient to establish the position which Faber has undertaken to defend. With respect to the alleged Manichæism of the Albigenses, it is true that this charge was usually brought against them by their persecutors, and by the Popish writers of the period; but it is just as true,—and we have it on the same authority,—that they themselves constantly denied that they held any Manichæan principles; that they persisted in this denial till their martyrdom; that no evidence was produced, either at the time or afterwards, that they held the Manichæan doctrine of two principles, original and eternal, or any of its legitimate consequences. So that we have in substance just the averment of their persecutors, burdened with the drawback of their having concurred in, or approved of, their having been put to death for conscience sake; and, on the other hand, their own denial of the charge, accompanied and followed by everything that could give it weight. The whole history of the Albigenses, and especially of the way in which they were calumniated and persecuted by the Church of Rome, irresistibly reminds us of the calumnies and persecutions directed against the primitive Christians in the second and third centuries; and the whole character and conduct of these men, as

it appears incidentally and unintentionally even in the narratives of their persecutors, is fitted to impress the mind with a strong conviction, that these victims of the cruelty of Papal Rome were men of the same character and principles as the earlier victims of Pagan Rome. Basnage thinks it probable that there were some persons among the separatists from the Church of Rome, in the south of France, who really were infected with some portion of Manichæan error; but he maintains that there is no evidence whatever of the truth of the charge in reference to the great body of those against whom it was adduced. In Pope Boniface VIII.'s celebrated Bull "Unam Sanctam,"—so famous for the extravagance of the claims which it put forth in behalf of the Papacy, for the silliness of its reasonings, and the grossness of its perversions of Scripture,—we have a curious instance of the slight and insufficient grounds on which the charge of Manichæism was sometimes based in those days; for the Pontiff there pronounces it to be a specimen of the Manichæan doctrine of two original principles, to maintain that the civil power is, in its own province, distinct from, and independent of, the ecclesiastical.* Faber, in the third chapter of the Second Book of his Inquiry above referred to, has given a very ingenious and plausible, though merely hypothetical, explanation of the way in which—by a not very unnatural or improbable perversion of the real scriptural doctrines of the Albigenses—the accusation of Manichæism might have originated, without its originators having incurred the guilt of pure and absolute fabrication.

Upon the whole, we think it has been proved that there is no satisfactory evidence that the great body of those who, under the name of Albigenses, were in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries persecuted by the Church of Rome to almost entire extermination, held Manichæan errors, and that there is no reason to doubt that they were martyred, because, in opposition to the Papacy, they faithfully and honestly maintained apostolic Protestant doctrine; and that having been "slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held," they are still crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?"†

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* Corpus Juris Canonici; Extrav. Com., Lib. i., tit. viii., c. i.
† Rev. vi. 9, 10.

Bossuet's third and fourth positions, however, concerning the origin and doctrine of the Waldenses, are, perhaps, still more important, so far as the argument is concerned, as Faber professes to be quite willing to rest upon them, even if the Albigenses were given up as Manichæan heretics. The averment of Bossuet and Papists is, that they originated with, and derived their name from, Peter Waldo, or Waldus, a rich merchant of Lyons, about the middle of the twelfth century; and it is certain that this individual separated from, and opposed, the Church of Rome,—that he gave abundant evidence of personal piety,—that he exerted himself in translating and circulating the sacred Scriptures, and in diffusing divine truth,—and thus became in a manner the founder of an anti-Popish sect, and entitled himself to a most honourable place among the witnesses for the truth. But it has also been contended,—and, we have no doubt, proved by sufficient evidence,—that *before* his time there existed in the valleys of the Alps an orthodox church, separated from, and opposed to, that of Rome; and there is, moreover, some fair ground for believing that Waldo had been himself originally connected with this pure church in the Alpine valleys,—that he taught the same doctrines which they held, and which he had learned from them,—and that afterwards his followers, when expelled from France along with the remains of the Albigenses that escaped the exterminating crusades, took refuge in the Alps, and joined the ancient Waldensian church, which had previously subsisted there, and with whose doctrine they agreed—from which, indeed, in the case of the more immediate followers of Waldo, their doctrines had been derived. We do not mean to aver that all these positions about the connection between Waldo and the old Waldensians of the Alps have been fully proved, but merely that there are a good many considerations which attach to them a high degree of probability, so that we would not hesitate to receive them, as we receive many other historical facts which are not very thoroughly established, while we would certainly not like to rest upon their truth or certainty any point of argument in controversy.* The question, then, now is, What further do we know concerning the origin and history of this Waldensian church in the valleys of the Alps? It is certain that this church claimed to itself

* *Vide* Faber's Inquiry.

a remote antiquity, previous to the time of Waldo, and that this claim was generally conceded to it even by Popish writers. Beyond this there is not much that can be fairly regarded as certain or as established by satisfactory evidence. That a church of this description existed there in the time of Claude of Turin, in the ninth century,—who has been sometimes called the first Protestant,—there is fair reason to believe; and of its continued existence, and its substantial orthodoxy and purity, there is no reason to doubt. This, however, cannot be said to *prove* the existence of a church maintaining the succession of orthodox doctrine from the ninth to the twelfth century; and beyond the ninth century, in going backwards, there is really nothing deserving the name of evidence adduced in support of a visible organized orthodox church amid the valleys of the Alps. The Papists certainly have failed in showing that the Waldenses, —*i.e.*, the ancestors of the present Waldenses, in the valleys of the Alps,—derived their origin from Peter Waldo of Lyons in the twelfth century; but Faber, and other Protestants who adopt similar views, have equally failed in tracing, upon sure historical grounds, their unbroken succession as an organized church backwards from the twelfth century to the comparatively purer church of the early ages.

As to Bossuet's fourth position, that the Waldenses did not differ materially in doctrine from the Roman Church, but separated and remained apart from her, rather on grounds of discipline than doctrine,—and therefore cannot be appealed to by Protestants as preserving, for any portion of time, the succession of apostolic, anti-Popish doctrine,—we have no doubt that it has been conclusively disproved; and that satisfactory evidence has been adduced that, from the Reformation back to the eleventh century, and, in all probability, without any interruption to the time of Claude of Turin in the ninth, they were decidedly opposed, upon scriptural grounds, to the leading features in the system of Popish doctrine, and held in substance the great leading doctrines of Protestantism. This, we think, has been established by Basnage and by Faber, in answer to Bossuet; and it is a fact full of interest and value, and one which must ever invest the history of the Waldenses with an importance which attaches to comparatively few departments in the history of the church.

Upon the whole, then, we are persuaded that the attempt

made by Faber and others, to establish, through the Albigenses and Waldenses, an unbroken succession of apostolic Protestant doctrine, *as held and maintained by a visible organized church*, distinct from the Greek and Roman Churches, has failed; and the conclusion, therefore, is, either that our Saviour's promises do not imply and require this, or else that they have been fulfilled in the Greek and Roman Churches, and that these, therefore, must be regarded as having been, at the period of the Reformation, substantially sound and orthodox churches of Christ. It is a singular specimen of injudicious rashness in Faber to have staked so much upon a historical position, of which such meagre evidence could be adduced, and when there is so little in the terms in which our Saviour's promises are expressed to afford any plausible ground for enforcing the necessity of the concession. It is the duty, indeed, of upright men to guard carefully against the temptation of either perverting our Lord's statements, in order to bring them into accordance with the supposed facts of history; or, on the other hand, of perverting the facts of history in order to bring them into an accordance with the supposed import of our Lord's statements. But Faber, we think, has failed, both in interpreting aright our Lord's words, and in establishing his leading historical position of the unbroken succession of a visible organized orthodox church through the Waldenses; and there is really no difficulty in showing the accordance of the actual facts of history with all that our Saviour's promises can be proved necessarily to imply. His church, though not always appearing in a visible organized form, has never been destroyed from the earth. He has always had a seed to serve Him,—placed, it may be, in great variety of outward circumstances, living some of them within the pale of very corrupt churches, but still holding His truth, and walking in His ways. And the history of the Albigenses and Waldenses, which Faber has done a great deal to illustrate, affords most important and valuable matter for developing the fulfilment of Christ's promises, and assisting us in forming a just appreciation of the true character and tendencies of the great adversary of Christ and His cause —the apostate Church of Rome.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHURCH AT THE ERA OF THE REFORMATION.

We have now surveyed the history of the church, and especially of the doctrines which it held forth and propagated, and of the discussions to which these doctrines gave rise, from the time of the apostles down to the beginning of the sixteenth century,—the era of the Reformation.

The sixteenth century is a period of surpassing interest and importance in the history of the church,—the most interesting and important, indeed, in many respects, of all, except that in which the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, and in which His own inspired apostles went forth to teach all nations in His name. Its leading general characteristic may be said to be, that it presents a remarkable, an extraordinary, manifestation of divine power and divine grace,—of God's special agency in raising up men eminently gifted and qualified by the indwelling of His Spirit; and in so communicating His grace, and so regulating the course of events, as to make these men instrumental in conferring most important benefits upon the church and upon the world. It presents to our contemplation a considerable number of most remarkable men, richly furnished of God with intellectual and spiritual endowments, placed in Providence in peculiarly interesting and trying circumstances, and effecting at length most important and valuable results. The events of this century are fitted, perhaps, more than those of any since the apostolic age, at once to illustrate the great principles of God's moral government in His dealings with His church, and to afford most important practical lessons for the instruction and guidance of His people, both collectively and individually.

The century opens with nearly the whole professing church sunk in abject slavery to the See of Rome, with one of the most infamous miscreants that ever disgraced human nature (Alexander VI.) claiming to be, and regarded by the great body

of Christendom as being, the vicar of Christ on earth, and the monarch of His church; and with the whole body of the church sunk in the grossest ignorance, superstition, and immorality. We have then presented to our view a very small number of humble and obscure individuals led to raise their voice against this state of things, to expose its inconsistency in all respects with the will of God revealed in His word, and to reject the usurped authority of those who presided over it. We see vast power and extraordinary appliances put forth by the potentates of the earth—civil and ecclesiastical—to crush this opposition, but without success. We see these humble individuals, in the face of difficulties only inferior to those which the apostles encountered, attaining to a measure of success, and achieving results second only to those which inspired men enjoyed and effected,—results bearing most materially upon the temporal and spiritual condition of men, and still largely affecting the state of the world; and in connection with the origin, progress, and results of this great movement, our attention is directed to a long series of interesting transactions, in which the counsels of monarchs, the intrigues of politicians, and the conflicts of armies, were strikingly directed and overruled of God for aiding the efforts of His servants, for frustrating the machinations of His enemies, and accomplishing His own purposes, both of judgment and of mercy. The men whom God employed in this work must be objects of no ordinary interest to all who feel concerned about the promoting of God's glory, and the advancement of His cause. It must be at once useful and delightful to examine who and what they were, what natural endowments they possessed, what spiritual gifts and graces the Lord bestowed upon them; and how their character and conduct were influenced by the circumstances in which they were placed, how they bore their trials, discharged their duties, and improved their opportunities. It is abundantly evident, that, with all their excellences, the Reformers were men of like passions with ourselves, and not unfrequently exhibited in their words and actions the common infirmities of even renewed human nature. But this, too, opens up to us additional sources of interest and instruction in examining their history; for we are not only entitled, but bound, to notice their errors, infirmities, and shortcomings, and the bearing of these upon the cause they supported, and the objects they aimed at,—and thus to learn useful lessons for the regulation of our

own views and conduct. It is important to acquire a familiarity with the principal transactions which constitute the Reformation, and with the lives and character of the principal Reformers. But it is not my intention to dwell upon historical or biographical matter,—to trace the connection of events in providence, however important,—or to delineate the character of men, however excellent and useful. This has been done abundantly in works which are easily accessible.* We must restrict ourselves to the theology of the sixteenth century.

This is by far the most important feature in the history of the church of this period. The great distinguishing fact of the Reformation was the revival and restoration of sound doctrine, of the true principles taught in the sacred Scriptures in regard to the worship of God and the way of a sinner's salvation; and another, next in importance to this in a theological point of view, was the way in which this restoration of the true doctrines of God's word was received by the Church of Rome, or, in other words, the formal adoption and consecration by the Council of Trent, in opposition to the scriptural doctrines of the Reformers, of many of those errors in doctrine and practice which had been growing up in the church during a period of about fourteen hundred years. The restoration, then, of the doctrine, worship, and government of the church to a large measure at least of apostolic purity, on the one hand; and, on the other, the perpetuation by supposed infallible authority, as the creed of the Church of Rome, of many of the heresies and corruptions which had grown up during the long intervening period,—form the great features of the sixteenth century, in a theological point of view; and the examination of these subjects in the light of God's word will afford abundant materials for profitable and interesting reflection.

The system of theology adopted by the Reformers was, in its leading features, correctly deduced from the word of God, and deservedly retains its place in the symbolical books of most of the Reformed churches. Theological science may, indeed, be said to have been considerably altered and extended since the era of the Reformation; but these changes, in so far as they are improvements, respect more the form and aspect in which the scheme of

* See the Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 2, etc.—EDRS.

divine truth is represented and established, than the substance of the materials of which it is composed: they relate much more to the precise meaning of particular statements of Scripture, than to the great general conclusions which ought to be deduced from an examination of its contents. The doctrines of the Reformers with regard to the total depravity of fallen man, and the utter servitude or bondage of his will, with reference to anything spiritually good, in consequence of this depravity; his inability to do anything for his own salvation, either by meriting aught at God's hand, or by effecting any real improvement upon his own character and condition; his justification by God's free grace upon the ground of Christ's righteousness received by faith alone; the sovereign purposes and efficacious agency of God in providing and applying to men the redemption purchased by Christ; and the true place occupied by the church as a society, by its ordinances and arrangements, and by everything of an external kind, as distinguished from personal union to Christ by faith in God's great scheme of salvation;—*on all these points* the doctrines of the Reformers can be proved to be in full accordance with the sacred Scriptures, and to have been only confirmed by the assaults which have been made upon them. They have been opposed not only by Papists, but by Protestants. They have been assailed by men who professed to be greatly concerned for the dignity of human nature and the interests of morality. They have been attacked more or less openly by superficial and conceited men, who, professing great zeal for the interests of religion and the conversion of sinners, have devised easier and simpler methods of effecting these results. But the Lord has ever raised up men well qualified to defend these doctrines, and He has ever honoured them as the instruments of accomplishing His purposes of mercy. These doctrines honour Him, and He will honour them. He will continue, as in time past, to make them the instruments, in the hand of His Spirit, of bringing men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto Himself; and as, at the time of the Reformation, He employed these doctrines, and the men to whom He had taught them, for inflicting a deadly wound upon His great adversary, the apostate Church of Rome, so He will continue to employ the same instrumentality in all future contests with the man of sin, until that system, and every other that may set itself in opposition to His revealed will and purposes, shall be

destroyed by the breath of His mouth, and consumed by the brightness of His coming.

It is important to mark what the doctrines were, which, at the commencement of the Reformation, the Church of Rome, as such, may be fairly held to have publicly and officially adopted, especially as this inquiry is connected with some discussions of general interest which have attracted much attention in the present day. I have already referred to Dr Field's celebrated work "On the Church," in the third edition of which, published in 1635, there is an appendix to the third book, where, as the title bears, "it is clearly proved that the Latin or Western Church, in which the Pope tyrannized, was, and continued, a true orthodox and Protestant church, and that the devisers and maintainers of Romish errors and superstitious abuses were only a faction in the same, *at the time* when Luther, not without the applause of all good men, published his propositions against the profane abuses of Papal indulgences." This doctrine was very acceptable to the Tractarians of our own day in the earlier stages of their progress; because, if true, it enabled them to maintain that the Reformers, at least the Anglican ones, had never seceded from the Latin or Western Church, but had merely reformed, in opposition to the Pope, some corruptions which had grown up in the church, though never sanctioned by it; that it was the same church which subsisted, and of which they were office-bearers and members, before and after the Reformation; and that it was only the novelties introduced by the Council of Trent after the Reformation, and the tyranny of the Papal See in enforcing them, that obstructed the union of the Latin or Western Church upon Catholic principles. These were very favourite notions with the Tractarians for a time, chiefly for this reason, that they enabled them to give a sort of vindication of the Reformation; and, at the same time, to avoid representing it as giving any sanction to the right of men, in the exercise of their own private judgment as to the truth of doctrines, to set themselves in opposition to the authority of the church. At length, however, the more able and honest men among them came to see that this was a weak and indefensible compromise, and convinced themselves that the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent afforded no more adequate ground for renouncing, or remaining in a state of separation from, the catholic church, than those doctrines which

had been publicly sanctioned before Luther and Zwingle began the work of Reformation.

Another reason for adverting to this subject, independently of this special argument and discussion, is, that we meet with some diversity of statement even among approved Protestant authors upon the matter referred to,—most of them, indeed, asserting that there were some important errors which were generally taught in the Church of Rome, but not formally sanctioned by the church, as such, till the Council of Trent; and others, though not absolutely denying this statement, thinking it true only to a very limited extent; while the opposite extreme to this,—viz., that no heresies warranting and requiring secession had been formally and fully adopted by the Church of Rome before the commencement of the Reformation,—has been adopted by others besides Dr Field, who were not Tractarians. I cannot enter into detail upon this subject,—which might easily be drawn out to almost any length as an important department in the history of theology,—but will briefly state the substance of what appears to me to be capable of being established by satisfactory evidence with respect to it, notwithstanding the difficulty, or rather impossibility,—obviously fatal to the ordinary claims and professions of the Papists,—of ascertaining what are, and what are not, œcumenical and infallible councils binding the whole church by their decisions. Unguarded and extreme statements upon this subject are not unfrequently found in Protestant authors; but the general truth upon the point may, I think, be fairly comprehended in the two following positions:—First, the Latin or Western Church, as such, under the dominion of the Pope, had, before the Reformation, publicly and officially sanctioned such doctrinal errors as rendered it lawful and necessary to abandon her communion, and had sanctioned them in such a way that she could not retract them without thereby contradicting and renouncing all her claims to obedience and submission;—and, secondly, there are some important doctrinal errors now forming part of the recognised creed of the Church of Rome, which, though generally taught there before the Reformation, did not receive the formal sanction of the church, as such, till the Council of Trent.

With respect to the first of these positions,—viz., that before the Reformation the Latin or Western Church was officially and irrevocably committed to important doctrinal errors, which fully

warranted secession from her communion,—I do not mean to attempt a detail of all the errors that can be established against her, but will merely refer to a few of the most important and notorious.

Protestants have usually received, as scriptural and orthodox, the doctrinal decisions of the first four general councils, and even of the fifth and sixth; though in all of them increasingly,—and especially in the last two,—many deviations from the scriptural primitive practice with respect to the government and worship of the church were countenanced, and too much evidence was given of the growing influence of a worldly and secular spirit in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. But then the very next general council,—the seventh, or the second Council of Nice, in the eighth century,—involved the church, Eastern and Western,—for it is received by the Greek as well as by the Latin Church,—in all the guilt, theoretical and practical, of idolatry; for it formally and fully sanctioned and enjoined the worship of images,—thus at once teaching an important doctrinal error, and sanctioning an idolatrous practice. The Council of Trent, in its decree about the worship of images, founds mainly * upon the authority of this second Council of Nice, and certainly gives no decision upon the subject which the acts of that council did not fully warrant; and consequently it pronounced no judgment upon this point, the guilt of which had not rested upon the whole church, as such, for more than seven hundred years before the Reformation: for the opposition made to the decisions of the second Nicene Council by a provincial synod at Frankfort, under the auspices of the Emperor Charlemagne, though a very important historical fact, and very annoying to the Romanists, did not last long, or accomplish much against the prevailing tide of idolatry; and certainly it does not affect the truth of the position, that the decrees of this council in favour of image-worship were received and acted upon by the whole church for many centuries before the appearance of Luther.

The same position holds true *in substance* of the other leading department of Romish idolatry, or rather polytheism,—viz., the invocation and worship of the Virgin Mary, and of saints and angels. We say *in substance*, because there is no such formal

* Sess. xxv.

decision of any œcumenical council preceding that of Trent in support of these practices, and the doctrines on which they are based; and the reasons of this are, that they crept in at an earlier period than image-worship: at least the invocation and worship of saints, though not of Mary, advanced more gradually, and at length prevailed universally in the church, without calling forth much public opposition, or requiring any formal decision of a council to maintain them,—facts which emboldened the Council of Trent to perpetrate the deliberate falsehood of asserting * that "they were, in accordance with the practice of the catholic and apostolic church, handed down from the earliest period of the Christian religion, and sanctioned by the consent of the holy fathers and the decrees of the sacred councils,"—without thinking it needful to refer to any specific evidence or testimony in support of the allegation. But though there is no formal decision of any œcumenical council previous to the Reformation in favour of the invocation and worship of saints and angels, there can be no question that the doctrine and practice of the church as to the substance of this matter had been conclusively and irrevocably fixed for many centuries, and that the Council of Trent did not go one step upon this point beyond what had been universally approved and practised by the church for many hundred years. It is true that, before the Reformation, there had been discussions and disputes among Romanists themselves as to the kind and degree of the worship or *cultus* that was to be paid to saints and images, and as to the foundations on which it rested. But the Council of Trent took good care not to decide these knotty points; and they remain undecided to this day, still occasionally giving rise to differences of opinion among the defenders of Popish idolatry. In regard, then, to the important charge of idolatry and polytheism brought by Protestants against the Church of Rome,—a charge including at once doctrinal error and sinful practice,—it is perfectly plain that the whole guilt of it had been incurred by the church, as such, long before the Reformation, and that this guilt was not even aggravated by anything that was done by the Council of Trent. It is true, indeed, that some of the earliest Reformers, and especially Luther, did not rest much upon this charge of idolatry, or see fully, for some time at least, the guilt which it

* Sess. xxv.

involved; but the Protestant system, as developed and defended by the comprehensive master mind of Calvin, brought out this idolatrous corruption of the worship of God as a leading charge against the Church of Rome, and one of the main grounds that rendered it obligatory to secede from her communion.

The other leading errors which it can be proved that the Church of Rome had officially sanctioned before the Reformation were these:—transubstantiation,—the absolute necessity, in order to forgiveness, of the confession of all mortal sins, etc., to a priest,—the duty of extirpating heretics, and the right of the church to compel the civil power to aid in this work,—as settled by the fourth or great Lateran Council in 1215;—the supremacy of the Pope as the ruler of the universal church,—and the existence of a purgatory after death, in which believers are punished for their purgation, and in which they derive benefit from the prayers and satisfaction offered for them on earth,—as settled by the Council of Florence in 1435;—the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics,—and the non-obligation of communion under both kinds, or, as it is usually called, *communio sub utrâque specie*, or, for the sake of brevity, *sub utrâque*,—that is, the use of the cup or wine as well as the bread in the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper,—as settled by the Council of Constance.

The fourth or great Lateran Council is unanimously regarded by Romanists as œcumenical and infallible; and though a variety of strange and forced expedients have been tried by some of them, especially by the defenders of the Gallican liberties, to get quit of the authority of those of its decisions that involved an assumption of jurisdiction by the church over the civil power—(as, for instance, by alleging that, in pronouncing these decisions, it did not properly act in its ecclesiastical capacity as a council, but by the authority of the civil powers, who were present in great numbers upon the occasion),—yet the binding ecclesiastical authority of all its other decisions has been invariably maintained in the Church of Rome. It established, then, beyond all question the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the change of the whole substance of the bread and wine, after consecration in the Lord's Supper, into the real flesh and blood of Christ, and the necessity, in order to forgiveness, of the confession of all mortal sins to a priest,—the first a monstrous absurdity, and the other a principle of flagrant tyranny, and tending directly to corrupt the doctrine of justification. In regard to

confession, the Council of Trent did little more in substance than repeat the canon of the fourth Lateran Council upon this subject, commonly called "omnis utriusque sexus," referring to it by name, and formally approving of it. With respect to transubstantiation, though the Council of Trent has expounded it more in detail, and imposed upon the belief of the church some additional absurdities and extravagances in their explanations of it, so as to cut off the evasions by which some of the more rational Papists, who flourished in the intervening period, endeavoured to soften or modify the canon of the Council of Lateran; yet there can be no doubt that the whole substance of the doctrine of the church,—of all to which the Church of Rome is even now committed,—was really contained in that canon, and of course became the formal doctrine of the church in the beginning of the thirteenth century.

In regard to the Council of Florence, it can scarcely be said to be unanimously admitted to be œcumenical by the Romanists; for its claim to this character is denied by some, though not by all, of the defenders of the Gallican liberties. This denial is based mainly upon its having been set up by Pope Eugenius IV. in opposition to the Council of Basle, which was sitting at the same time, and which the French generally regard as œcumenical. The more decided and consistent defenders of the Gallican liberties maintain that it was illegal and incompetent for Pope Eugenius to dissolve, as he did, the Council at Basle, and to transfer its sittings first to Ferrara, then to Florence; and those more courtly French authors, who, like Natalis Alexander, maintain that the Council of Florence was legitimately convocated, and therefore œcumenical, are virtually forced, in defending this position, to throw their Gallican principles overboard for the time. But, after all, this is more a question of form than substance; for the *doctrinal* decisions of the Council of Florence have been universally received as sound and orthodox even by those Romanists who entertained great doubts as to the legal question of its formal authority. Upon this point the statement of Alexander is unquestionably well founded. It is in these words: "Denique Florentina synodus, ratione saltem dogmatum ab ea finitorum, œcumenica totius ecclesiæ catholicæ consensu prædicatur."* With respect to purgatory, the Council of Florence

* Natalis Alexander, vol. xviii., p. 608.

went at least as far as the Council of Trent, which on this point, and on the kindred topic of indulgences, spoke with extreme caution and reserve, though plainly enough indicating that the acknowledged doctrines of the church upon these points contained more than they thought it expedient at the time to declare. With respect to the supremacy of the Romish See and of the Pope, the decree of the Council of Florence, which does not assert either the Pope's personal infallibility or his superiority over a general council, is admitted *in terminis* by the Gallican clergy,—and, of course, by all Romanists,—as the doctrine of the church, though the Ultramontanists do not regard it as going far enough, or bringing out the whole truth upon the subject. And it is quite certain that the Council of Trent did not, by any formal decision, teach any other doctrine upon this fundamental principle of Popery than what the Church had been already committed to by the Council of Florence. Indeed, I do not know any sufficient evidence to prove that the Romish Church, *as such*, ever has been, or is now, justly chargeable with teaching any other doctrine upon this subject than what was decreed by the Council of Florence, although very many Papists have taught, and without any censure, that the Pope is personally infallible, and is superior to a general council; and although this, which is certainly the prevailing opinion among them, seems to be the natural result to which some of the acknowledged principles of Popery, and some of the grounds on which they are commonly defended, lead. The decision of the Council of Florence upon this subject, contained in what is called the "Decretum Unionis," or the Decree of Union with the Greeks, is this, "that the apostolic see and the Roman Pontiff hold the primacy or supremacy over the whole world; that he is the successor of St Peter, the prince of the apostles, the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that in St Peter full power was given to him by our Lord Jesus Christ of feeding, ruling, and governing the universal church."* This, then, was the universally and officially received doctrine of the Romish Church for at least nearly a century before the Reformation. All this power and authority were held to belong to the Pope, and to belong to him *jure divino*.

I have said that this decree is admitted *in terminis* by the

* Natalis Alexander, vol. xviii., pp. 633–4.

Gallican clergy, and, of course, by all Romanists. But it is fair to mention that there is one phrase in it about which some of the French writers have scrupled, unless it be understood and explained in a certain sense. It is the expression, "governing the universal church." They have no difficulty about ascribing to the Pope,—and that, too, *jure divino*,—a right to govern all the faithful, and all churches; but a right to govern the universal church might be construed so as to imply superiority to a general council, which they refuse to concede to him. A general or œcumenical council is held to *represent* the universal church, and upon its representing the universal church its supreme power and authority are based; but even an œcumenical council can scarcely be held to rise higher than the universal church which it represents; and if the Pope has the right to govern the universal church, he might be held by implication to have the right to govern, and, of course, to be superior to, the general council which represents it. Still they do not reject the decree *in terminis*, as they think it quite capable of a sound sense; but only are anxious to explain that they understand the phrase "universal church" distributively, as they say, *i.e.*, as synonymous with all churches, or every portion of the church, separately considered, and not collectively, as embracing the whole church in its totality represented in a general council. Indeed, Bossuet has shown, in the first book of his great work, entitled, "Defensio declarationis cleri Gallicani," that the French prelates in the Council of Trent objected to the repetition *in terminis* of the decree of the Council of Florence on the Pope's supremacy, fully admitting, at the same time, that it was capable of a sound sense, consistent with their principles, but afraid that it might also be held to admit of the construction above described, which would have brought it into collision with the Gallican liberties in the article of the superiority of a general council over the Pope; and he praises the candour and moderation of Pope Pius IV. in allowing the subject to be dropped in the council, and to be left without any new decree upon the footing on which the Council of Florence had placed it, and in assigning as his reason, that he did not wish any points to be decided but those in regard to which the fathers of the council were unanimous: "Quare," Bossuet* says, "Pius IV. non agit pugnaciter, neque ea sibi tribu-

* Defens. Declar. Cler. Gallic., Pars i., Lib. i., cap. ii.

enda contendit, quæ multi privato sensu, sed quæ omnes communi fide tribuerent, atque a Formula Florentinâ, rectâ licet, si bene intelligatur, sed tamen dubiâ Gallis in tanta re omnem ambiguitatem recusantibus temperandum putat." However, the Florentine formula, as Bossuet calls it, even with the Gallican explanation,—*i.e.*, taking the phrase "universal church" distributively and not collectively,—commits the whole church to the doctrine, as based upon Scripture and divine right, that the Pope is the successor of Peter, that he is the vicar of Christ on earth, the head of the whole Christian church, and invested by Christ with a right to rule and govern all the faithful, and all churches. And this is a doctrine which faithfulness to Christ and His word forbids us to admit, and requires us to renounce; while it also precludes the notion with which at one time some of the Tractarians seemed to be enamoured,—viz., that if they could only persuade the church of Rome to abandon what they then called the Tridentine novelties,—the innovations introduced by the Council of Trent,—*they* would willingly acknowledge the Pope of Rome as the patriarch of the whole Western Church, and thus get back, as they imagined, to the catholicity of the fifth century.

The only other topics to which I propose to advert, in illustration of the first general position, are,—the decrees of the Council of Constance as to the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics,—and the non-obligation of communion under both kinds. In regard to the recognised authority of the Council of Constance, the case stands shortly thus. It is regarded by the defenders of the Gallican liberties as œcumenical in all its decisions and actings; while by most other Romanists, the decrees of the fourth and fifth sessions, in which it determined that a general council is superior to a pope, are excepted. But while, on this account, it is not admitted by the Ultramontanists and the immediate adherents of the Pope into the ordinary catalogue of general councils, its decisions upon all other points, except the one specified, are received by them, and by all other Romanists, as œcumenical and infallible; and, therefore, its decrees in regard to keeping faith with heretics, and communion in both kinds, had been fully sanctioned and adopted by the church before the Reformation.

Papists of all sections have in modern times exerted their utmost ingenuity to exempt the Council of Constance and the Church of Rome from the guilt of having sanctioned, as a general

principle, the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics, and of having acted upon this principle in the case of John Huss. But all their ingenuity has proved fruitless. It can be proved that this nefarious principle was in substance asserted and acted upon by the Council of Constance in sessions which are admitted by all parties to be œcumenical, and which were afterwards confirmed by the Pope. The Council of Trent has certainly not gone any further in this matter than the Council of Constance had done. In the negotiations which were carried on for a time about the Protestants appearing at the Council of Trent, different forms of safe conduct (salvus conductus) were offered to them by the council, which were rejected as unsatisfactory; just as if any safe conduct would have protected them, if the Pope, having them once in his power, had thought it safe and expedient to put them to death. At length the council, professing to be very desirous that the Protestants should appear, agreed, in their eighteenth session, to give them a fuller and more ample safe conduct than any that had been formerly tendered to them; and, to remove the apprehensions reasonably inspired by the doctrine and practice of the Council of Constance, they expressly referred to these decisions, formally guaranteed the Protestants against all danger from that quarter, and suspended their force and operation for the present occasion, "quibus in hac parte pro hac vice derogat,"*—thus affording conclusive proof that the Council of Constance had sanctioned the breaking of faith with heretics, and recognising the principle as still the ordinary doctrine of the church, though its practical operation might be suspended by a competent authority upon a particular occasion.

In regard to communion in one kind, or in both kinds, the Council of Constance had explicitly laid down the doctrine, that there is nothing in Scripture imposing an obligation upon Christians, from deference to Christ's commandment, to communicate in both kinds, and that the church had full power to prohibit the use of the cup or the wine; and it exercised this power in actually forbidding what Christ had so clearly and explicitly enjoined upon His followers. This, then, was the established and undoubted doctrine and practice of the Romish Church for more than a century before the commencement of the Reformation; and the Council of Trent did nothing more upon this subject than repeat

* Sess. xviii.

the substance of the decree of the Council of Constance, and appeal to the authority of that council in support of their decision.

Thus, then, it appears that, before the Reformation and the Council of Trent, the Romish Church, *as such*, had by public and official acts incurred the guilt of idolatry and polytheism in worship, heresy in doctrine, and tyranny in government,—had given abundant evidence, not merely by prevalent relaxation of discipline and gross corruptions and abuses in practice, but by public and solemn deeds binding the whole communion, that she had already apostatized from the pure worship and the true doctrine of God,—that she claimed and exercised the right of altering Christ's arrangements, and trampling upon the rights and liberties of His people,—that she required of all her subjects beliefs and practices which a regard to Christ's honour and authority obliged them to repudiate,—that she required the belief of what was insulting to men's understandings, and the practice of what was opposed to the plain principles of morality; and that, *therefore*, it was not only warrantable in them, but incumbent upon them, to renounce her authority, to abandon her communion, and to provide for themselves the administration of God's ordinances, and the enjoyment of the means of grace, in a manner more accordant with the scriptural and primitive standard, and in circumstances in which their own consciences might be void of offence, and on which they had better reason to expect the divine blessing.

The *second* position necessary for bringing out the whole truth upon the state of doctrine in the church at the Reformation, is this,—that there are some important doctrinal errors, now undoubtedly forming part of the recognised creed of the Church of Rome, which, though generally taught in her communion before the Reformation, had not then formally the sanction of the church, as such, and which were for the first time imposed irrevocably by infallible authority in the Council of Trent; and the grounds of this position we would now briefly illustrate.

No one can fail to be struck with the consideration, that in contemplating the principal doctrinal errors which had become part of the formal and recognised creed of the church before the Reformation, there are none which are very closely or directly connected with the essential principles bearing on the way of a sinner's salvation,—none that very immediately impinged upon

what are commonly called the doctrines of grace; and yet Protestants now generally charge the Church of Rome with teaching dangerous error upon these most important subjects. In truth, this charge is mainly based upon grounds furnished by the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, upon statements which were sanctioned by that council, but which could not be proved to have been previously adopted by the church, as such, or by any authority entitled, upon her own principles, to represent her. Pelagianism,—which, if we take in also the modified form of it, commonly called semi-Pelagianism, may be held virtually to comprehend all that is anti-evangelical, everything that has been put forth by professing Christians in opposition to scriptural views of the doctrines of grace,—had, chiefly through the influence of Augustine, been condemned in general, or in the gross, by several Popes in the fifth century, and by the General Council of Ephesus. The decrees of the African Synod in the fifth, and of the Council of Orange in the sixth century, condemning explicitly and in detail Pelagian and semi-Pelagian errors, had, though not formally adopted by the universal church, or by any œcumenical council, been generally treated with respect and deference, when any reference was made to these topics; and no evidence has been produced to prove that, down to the Reformation, the church, as such, had formally and officially incurred the guilt of rejecting or condemning any of the leading principles of the Augustinian system of theology, or of setting itself in direct and palpable opposition to the doctrines of grace. Accordingly, Protestants have had no great difficulty in producing testimonies in support of scriptural or evangelical principles from men who lived in the communion of the Romish Church from Augustine to Luther, and even during the period that intervened between the commencement of the Reformation and the Council of Trent. There can be no question, however, that Pelagian and semi-Pelagian views had deeply tainted the ordinary teaching and authorship of the church long before the Reformation; and, indeed, we may say from the second century downwards.

The truth is, that Pelagian sentiments, or corruptions of the scriptural views of the doctrines of grace, are uniformly found to accompany a low state of personal religion,—these two things invariably acting and reacting upon each other, and operating reciprocally as cause and effect. The whole of the general bear-

ing and tendency of the Romish system was fitted at once to destroy personal religion, and to pervert or eradicate evangelical doctrine. Had Satan not succeeded in effecting both these objects,—although, indeed, the one necessarily implies or produces the other,—his masterpiece would have proved a failure. But he was permitted to succeed; and the consequence was, that, for many centuries before the Reformation, personal piety had in a great measure disappeared from the church; the true doctrines of the gospel,—at least true scriptural views of the way of a sinner's salvation,—were almost wholly unknown. Pelagianism, though not formally sanctioned by the church, pervaded the general teaching of her functionaries; and of the few who were not entirely indifferent about all religion, it might be said, that, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.

This state of matters, so far as speculative doctrine is concerned, was greatly promoted by the labours and writings of the schoolmen. Many of them were men of acute and vigorous intellect; but personal religion was in the scholastic age at a very low ebb: the humble and prayerful study of the word of God had been wholly abandoned; and the necessary consequence, upon the principle already adverted to, was, that their speculations upon theological subjects assumed, upon the whole, a decidedly Pelagian or anti-evangelical complexion. The schoolmen, indeed, may be fairly and justly regarded as being substantially the Rationalists of the middle ages; and though they continued to hold the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement,—chiefly, it would almost seem, as affording scope and materials for presumptuous, if not profane, speculations,—the general character of their views upon most of the other doctrines of the Christian system, resembled to a considerable extent that of the low Pelagianism of modern Socinians. It is quite true that valuable testimonies in support of some scriptural and anti-Pelagian doctrines have been produced from the writings of the scholastic divines, and especially from the two most eminent of them all,—Peter Lombard, the Master of Sentences, and Thomas Aquinas, commonly called the Angelic Doctor, or the Angel of the Schools, who had also the honour of being canonized. But the points on which these men held anti-Pelagian views, were *chiefly* (though not exclusively) those which were not

matters of pure revelation, which were based upon metaphysical reasonings as well as scriptural statements,—in regard to which powerful and vigorous intellects, if they got anything like fair play, might lead men to sound notions, even though they were not seeking and enjoying the guidance of the Spirit and word of God; and with respect to which error is not so certainly the accompaniment of ungodliness, as in the case of some other doctrines of Scripture, which, perhaps, come still more directly and immediately into contact with the ordinary apprehensions and workings of the human mind when first directed to religious subjects: in short, they were the doctrines of predestination, providence, divine agency, and necessity,—topics on which we have seen in modern times such men as Hobbes, Collins, and Priestley,—an atheist, an infidel, and a Socinian,—maintaining views *in some respects* very similar to those which are taught in the sacred Scriptures, and embodied in the scheme of evangelical and Calvinistic truth. Among the schoolmen in general, original sin was very much explained away; and the natural ability of man, as he is, to do the will of God, and to contribute to effect his own salvation, was broadly taught. Justification, as a distinct head of doctrine, was thrown into the background, and was seldom formally discussed; while all scriptural principles regarding it were virtually overturned by the errors held upon the points just referred to, and by the open assertion of the merit of good works, and the justifying efficacy of the sacraments. Pelagian principles upon these important points, though deeply pervading the speculations of the generality of the schoolmen, incurred no opposition or censure from the ecclesiastical authorities, just because they were very congenial to the prevailing sentiments and character of the age in regard to religion. These authorities, indeed, would still have professed, had there been any call to make the profession, that they respected the authority of Augustine, and rejected Pelagianism; while the fact is unquestionable, that the ordinary teaching of the schools and of the pulpit had become Pelagian to its core.

The church, indeed, in its public and official capacity, could not be said to have sanctioned these doctrinal errors; but they pervaded the public teaching of her functionaries, and she made no effort to check them. Bradwardine, Archbishop of Canterbury in the fourteenth century, commonly called Doctor Pro-

fundus, whose work, "De causa Dei contra Pelagium,"* marks an era of some importance in the history of theology, and contains a valuable defence of evangelical truth, though in a somewhat barbarous and scholastic form, deplores bitterly the general prevalence of Pelagian error over the church, and earnestly appeals to the Pope to interpose to check it, addressing him in these words: "Rise, Peter, why art thou sleeping?" But Peter did not find it convenient to hear him, and continued to sleep on; and, in consequence, the Pelagian heresy, in its grossest and most injurious forms, prevailed generally over the whole church in the beginning of the sixteenth century. A large portion of the zeal and energy of the Reformers was directed against these prevalent errors, which they ascribed very much to the influence of the schoolmen (of whom they commonly spoke in terms of perhaps more than merited contempt), and which they justly regarded as dishonouring to Christ, and injurious to the souls of men. In regard more especially to Luther, it may be said that his main vocation, work, and achievements, were just to expose and resist the prevalent Pelagian heresies which perverted the way of salvation, and corrupted the scheme of divine truth. His earlier opponents, fortified by the authority of the schoolmen, and the toleration at least of the ecclesiastical authorities, were open enough in defending Pelagian error, and in opposing the principles of evangelical truth, —the scriptural doctrines of grace. Before, however, the Council of Trent assembled, the Romanists had been impressed with the necessity of being a little more cautious in their statements upon these subjects, if they wished to keep up the profession which the church had all along made, more or less fully and honestly, of rejecting Pelagianism.†

In a production of Melancthon's, which displays all the infirmities of his character, and is in many respects extremely discreditable to him, written in the year 1536, when he was

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* Referred to in Amesii "Bellarminus Enervatus," tom. iv., p. 44. The passage in Bradwardine is on p. 872.

† Field (B. iii., c. viii., p. 85) gives a very curious extract from Cardinal Contarinus, or Contarini (of whose sound views of Justification, see Ranke's History of the Popes, pp. 37 and 53), in which the Cardinal complains, "That if any man did debase the nature of man, deject the pride of sinful flesh, magnify the riches of the grace of God, and urge the necessity of it, he was judged a Lutheran, and pronounced a heretic; though they that gloried in the name of Catholics were themselves Pelagian heretics."

carrying on some negotiations with Francis I. of France,* we find the following statement with reference to the growing soundness of Romanists on some of these questions since the commencement of the Reformation, and the consequent probability of an adjustment of all differences by mutual concessions: "Controversiam de justificatione ipsa tempora mollierunt. Nam de multis convenit inter doctos, de quibus fuerunt initio magna certamina. Nemo jam defendit ista absurda quæ leguntur apud Scholasticos, quòd homines possint Legi Dei satisfacere, quòd mereantur remissionem peccatorum dignitate suorum operum, quòd sint justi, id est, accepti propter propriam dignitatem, et legis impletionem. Omnes jam fatentur fide opus esse, hoc est fiducia in Christum in remissione peccatorum, de qua fide nulla est mentio in Scholasticis. Omnes jam fatentur interesse gloriæ Christi, ut illa fides inculcetur hominibus. Convenit item inter Doctos de libero arbitrio, de peccato originis et de plerisque aliis quæstionibus conjunctis." There is some truth in these positions, viewed merely as statements of fact, though, taken even in that light, they are far stronger than the evidence warrants: for the Romanists had not become quite so orthodox as Melancthon's statement represents them; while the inference which Melancthon desired to deduce from them, of the possibility and probability of a reconciliation with Rome, was wholly unwarranted. The Romanists, however, were feeling the necessity of throwing off the gross Pelagianism of the schoolmen, which had generally prevailed, and been defended, at the commencement of the Reformation; and in the Council of Trent their ingenuity was exerted to combine these three objects: First, to find something to condemn in the doctrines of the Reformers; secondly, to avoid as much as possible a formal condemnation of the scholastic doctrines; and, thirdly, to deprive their opponents of any very tangible ground for charging them with Pelagianism. How far they succeeded in combining these objects, we shall afterwards have occasion to consider; and in the meantime we may remark that the investigation will require some care, and is not unattended with difficulties: for it is not really so easy, as might at first sight appear, to explain and to make palpable how it is, and to what extent, that

* "Consilium de Moderandis Controversiis Religionis," Opera, vol. iv., p. 827.

the Church of Rome, as judged nakedly by the decisions of the Council of Trent, does pervert the gospel of the grace of God. But what we have to observe at present, and with reference to the subject under consideration, is, that though at the time of the Reformation the Pelagian heresy prevailed almost universally in the Church of Rome, and though in consequence she incurred great guilt, and did fearful injury to the souls of men, she had not then formally and officially, as a church, given her sanction to Pelagian errors; and that to whatever extent she may be now, as a church, publicly and formally responsible for anti-evangelical principles, directly injurious to the souls of men,—this is owing to her refusing to embrace the pure gospel light which the Reformation introduced, and to the proceedings of her last infallible council. Protestants have generally held,—and we have no doubt that the position can be established,—that the Council of Trent did, in its hatred to the doctrines of the Reformers, and in opposition to its obvious policy and general intention, erect into articles of faith, to be thereafter implicitly received by all men, various points which had formerly been left free as subjects of general speculation, and on which a considerable diversity of opinion prevailed among themselves; and that in this way the Church of Rome has become irrevocably committed to some important doctrinal errors, the guilt of holding which she had not formally incurred in her official capacity at the commencement of the Reformation, and from the guilt of which, therefore, *she might* then, without any sacrifice of her principles, have escaped, and, of course, might have been still exempted, but for the decisions of the Council of Trent.

The main topics of a doctrinal kind which are set forth with anything like minuteness of detail in the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, are these:—the rule of faith, original sin, justification, and the sacraments, both generally and particularly; the sacrament of the Eucharist, or of the altar, as they often call it, including the sacrifice of the mass; the sacrament of penance, including the subjects of confession, satisfaction, and absolution; and the sacrament of orders, including the hierarchy, or the ordinary government of the church,—the heads respectively under which these subjects are commonly ranked and discussed in Popish works on theology. Now, upon all these subjects it can be proved, I think, that the Council of Trent irrevocably committed the

Church of Rome to important doctrinal errors, which, though in most cases they had prevailed in the church long before, had hitherto been left free as topics of speculation, and had not been explicitly settled by any binding ecclesiastical authority.

The church had not before, in her official capacity, put tradition on a level with the written word, or thrust the apocryphal books into the canon of Scripture, or formally set up her own authority and the unanimous consent of the fathers as the standards according to which the Scripture must be interpreted. These principles had been largely acted upon in the Church of Rome, and with the most injurious effects upon the interests of sound doctrine and pure religion. But the church, as such, had not before incurred the guilt of corrupting the standard of God's truth, and trampling by a general law of universal obligation upon the ordinary rights of men in investigating it. She had, indeed, as we have already seen, required of her subjects the belief of some important doctrinal errors, which the word of God condemned, and which, consequently, a due regard to its authority should have obliged them to reject; but until after the Reformers, rejecting all human authority and mere ecclesiastical traditions in religious matters, appealed to the written word of God alone, the Church of Rome had not fully incurred the guilt of authoritatively and avowedly polluting the very fountains of divine truth, and of making the word of God of none effect.

In regard to original sin, the old decisions of the church against the Pelagians prevented the Council of Trent from going so far astray as otherwise the speculations of the schoolmen might have led them; and, accordingly, the formal symbolical doctrine of Rome upon this subject is much sounder than that of many men who have borne the name of Protestants, though she has contrived by other means to neutralize the wholesome influence which scriptural views of original sin usually exert upon men's conceptions of the whole scheme of divine truth. But the main error which the council imposed upon the belief of the church on this topic,—viz., that concupiscence in the regenerate, by which is meant very much what we commonly understand by indwelling sin, is *not* sin,—had not before received any formal ecclesiastical sanction, and that, therefore, it might be, and in point of fact was, opposed by some who continued in the Papal communion.

The doctrine of justification occupied a very prominent place

in the minds and in the writings of the Reformers. There is no doctrine of greater intrinsic importance, and there was certainly none that had been more thoroughly obscured and perverted for a very long period. Even Augustine's statements upon this point were not free from error and ambiguity; and this doctrine, as we have had occasion to observe in another connection, though the main subject of controversy in the church in the apostolic age, had never again been fully and formally discussed till the age of the Reformation: not certainly because Satan's enmity to the scriptural truth upon this important point had been mitigated, but because he had fully succeeded in condemning and burying it without controversy, and without the formal exercise of ecclesiastical authority. There was, indeed, no previous decision of the church which could be said to have formally and explicitly defined anything upon this subject; and when the Reformers brought out from God's word, and under the guidance of His Spirit, the truth upon this point, which had been buried and trampled on almost since the apostolic age, so far, at least, as concerns a correct scientific exposition of it (for we willingly admit that there were many who, with confused and erroneous speculative views upon the subject, were practically and in heart relying wholly upon the one sacrifice and the one righteousness of Christ), the Church of Rome was free,—unfettered by any previous ecclesiastical proceeding,—to have embraced and proclaimed the doctrines of Scripture regarding it. We learn from Father Paul, in his history of the Council of Trent,* that when the fathers of Trent came to consider the subject of justification, they felt themselves somewhat perplexed, because it was not a subject which they had been accustomed to discuss, as it formed no distinct head in the scholastic theology. Original sin had been largely discussed in the schools, and therefore the fathers were somewhat at home in it. But as to justification, not one of the schoolmen, as Father Paul says, had even conceived, and far less refuted, Luther's views regarding it. The fathers had therefore to proceed upon an unknown track; and as they did not take the word of God for their guide, they introduced for the first time into the formally recognised theology of the Church of Rome, statements which, though cau-

* Tome i., Livre ii., lxxv., p. 335. Courayer.

tiously and skilfully prepared, can be shown to contradict the sacred Scriptures, to misrepresent the divine method of justification, and thereby to endanger the souls of men.

The history of the sacraments in the theology of the church is similar in some respects to that of justification. Corrupt and dangerous notions as to their nature, objects, and efficacy, had been early introduced, had spread far, and done much injury to religion; but the church, as such, was just as little tied up at the period of the Reformation by formal and official decisions regarding them,—I mean, chiefly so far as concerns those general points usually discussed by theologians under the head "de sacramentis in genere,"—as regarding justification. But there was this important difference,—viz., that the sacraments had been very fully discussed by the schoolmen, both generally and particularly. Indeed, the doctrine of the sacraments, in the endless detail of minute speculation that has been brought to bear upon it, may be said to be very much the product of the disputations of the scholastic theologians. The fathers of Trent, therefore, were at home upon this topic; and having got over the perplexing subject of justification, they disported themselves more freely amid the inventions and speculations of the schoolmen on the subject of the sacraments, and thus introduced into the recognised theology of the church, upon mere scholastic authority, and with scarcely even a pretence to anything like the sanction of Scripture or primitive tradition, a huge mass of doctrine and ceremony,—most of which had been invented and devised during the three preceding centuries,—which the church as such had never before adopted,—and which was opposed to the teaching of the sacred Scriptures, and fitted to exert a most injurious influence upon the purity of God's worship, the accurate exhibition of the way of salvation, and the eternal welfare of men.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COUNCIL OF TRENT.

The Council of Trent marks a very important era in the history of the church, because, as has been often remarked, its termination, —which took place in the year 1563, the year before the death of Calvin,—virtually marks the termination of the progress of the Reformation, and the commencement of that revived efficiency of Popery which has enabled it to retain, ever since, all at least that was then left to it, and even to make some encroachments upon what the Reformation had taken from it. How far this result is to be ascribed to the Council of Trent, directly or indirectly; and in what way, if at all, it was connected with the proceedings of the council, are very interesting subjects of investigation to the philosophic student of history. But the importance of the Council of Trent, in a more directly theological point of view, depends upon the considerations, that its records embody the solemn, formal, and official decision of the Church of Rome,—which claims to be the one, holy, catholic church of Christ,—upon all the leading doctrines taught by the Reformers; that its decrees upon all doctrinal points are received by all Romanists as possessed of infallible authority; and that every Popish priest is sworn to receive, profess, and maintain everything defined and declared by it.

God was pleased, through the instrumentality of the Reformers, to revive the truths revealed in His word on the most important of all subjects, which had been long involved in obscurity and error. They were then brought fully out and pressed upon men's attention, and the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent show us in what way the Church of Rome received and disposed of them. After full time for deliberation and preparatory discussion, she gave a solemn decision on all these important questions,—a decision to which she must by her fundamental principles unchangeably adhere, even until her eventful and most marvellous

history shall terminate in her destruction, until she shall sink like a great millstone, and be found no more at all.*

It is not, indeed, to be supposed that the decisions of the Council of Trent form the exclusive standard of the doctrines to which the Church of Rome is pledged; for it is but the last of eighteen general councils, all whose decisions they profess to receive as infallible, though they are not agreed among themselves as to what the eighteen councils are that are entitled to this implicit submission. Still the Reformers brought out fully at length, —though Luther attained to scriptural views on a variety of points only gradually after he had begun the work of Reformation,—all that they thought objectionable in the doctrines and practices which prevailed in the Church of Rome; and on most of these topics that church gave her decision in the Council of Trent. There were, indeed, some questions,—and these of no small importance,—on which the Council of Trent was afraid, or was not permitted, to decide. One of these was the real nature and extent of the Papal supremacy,—a subject on which, though Bellarmine says that the whole of Christianity hangs upon it, it is scarcely possible to ascertain up to this day what the precise doctrine of the Church of Rome is. The Court of Rome succeeded, in general, in managing the proceedings of the council as it chose; but it had sometimes, in the prosecution of this object, to encounter considerable difficulties, and was obliged to have recourse to bribery, intimidation, and many species of fraud and manœuvring; and even with all this, it was on several occasions not very certain beforehand as to the results of the discussions in the council on some points in which its interests were involved. On this account the Popes were afraid to allow the subject of their own supremacy to be brought into discussion; and those, whether Protestants or Papists, who wish to know the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this important subject, must go back to the Councils of Constance and Florence, and interpret and reconcile *their* decisions as they best can.

The Church of Rome, of course, can never escape from the responsibility of what was enacted and decided at Trent; but she may have incurred new and additional responsibility by subsequent decisions, even though there has not since been any œcu-

* Rev. xviii. 21.

menical council. And there are additional decisions on some doctrinal points discussed in the Council of Trent, which, on principles formerly explained, are binding upon the Church of Rome, and must be taken into account in order to understand fully her doctrines upon certain questions. I refer here more particularly to the bulls of Popes Pius V. and Gregory XIII., condemning the doctrines of Baius, the precursor of Jansenius; the bull of Innocent X., condemning the five propositions of Jansenius; and the bull Unigenitus by Clement XI., condemning the Jansenist or Augustinian doctrines of Quesnel,—documents which contain more *explicit* evidence of the Pelagianism (taken in a historical sense) of the Church of Rome than any that is furnished by the decrees of the Council of Trent. That the bull Unigenitus is binding upon the Church of Rome is generally admitted, and may be said to be certain; and the obligation of the condemnation of the doctrines of Baius and Jansenius rests upon the very same grounds. This is now generally admitted by Romanists, though, at the time when these bulls were published, there were some who denied their authority, and refused to submit to them. It may be worth while to mention, as an evidence of this, that Moehler, the most skilful and accomplished defender of Popery in the present century, having, in the earlier editions of his Symbolism, spoken of a particular opinion in regard to the moral constitution of man before the fall as generally held by the Romish Doctors, but as not an article of faith or *de fide*, and binding upon the church; and having afterwards found,—as, indeed, he might have seen in Bellarmine,*—that the denial of the opinion in question had been condemned by Popes Pius and Gregory in their bulls against Baius, retracts his error, and asserts that the opinion must on this ground be received as a binding article of faith.†

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* Bellarminus, de Gratia primi hominis, c. i. and v.

† Moehler's Symbolism, vol. i., p. 37. The bull against the errors of Baius is given in Natalis Alexander, Hist. Eccles., Saec. xv. and xvi., cap. ii., art. 14; and there is an English translation of it subjoined to Buckley's translation of the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent, 1851.

There is a full account of this matter, with a discussion of the genuineness and authority of a bull of Urban VIII. in 1641, confirming the bulls of Pius and Gregory against Baius, and of the proceedings in regard to Jansenius, in Baillie's Theologia Moralis; De Gratia Christi, tom. v.

This incident, though intrinsically insignificant, may be regarded as relatively of some importance,—not only as showing that the condemnation of the doctrines of Baius is acknowledged to be binding upon the Church of Rome, but still more, as illustrating the *difficulty* of ascertaining what are the recognised and authoritative doctrines of that church, when such a man as Moehler, who had been nine years a professor of theology in a celebrated German university before he published his Symbolism, fell into a blunder of this sort. But although it is certain that in order to have a full and complete view of the doctrines of the Church of Rome,—the doctrines to which that church, with all her claims to infallibility, is pledged, and for which we are entitled to hold her responsible,—we must in our investigations both go farther back, and come later down, than the Council of Trent; still it remains true, that the decrees and canons of that council furnish the readiest and most authentic means of ascertaining, *to a large extent*, what the recognised doctrines of the Church of Rome are, and exhibit the whole of the response which she gave to the chief scriptural doctrines revived by the Reformers; and this consideration has ever given, and ever must continue to give, it a most important place in the history of theology. The Romanists, of course, demand that all professing Christians, *i.e.*, all baptized persons,—for they hold that baptism, heretical or Protestant baptism, subjects all who have received it to the authority of the Pope, the head of the church,—shall receive all the decrees of the Council of Trent as infallibly true, on the ground that, like any other general œcumenical council, it was certainly guided into all truth by the presiding agency of the Holy Ghost.

The style and title which the council assumed to itself in its decrees was, "The holy (or sacrosanct) œcumenical and general Council of Trent, legitimately congregated in the Holy Ghost, and presided over by the legates of the Apostolic See." The title which they were to assume was frequently matter of discussion in the council itself, and gave rise to a good deal of controversy and dissension. Some members of the council laboured long and zealously to effect that, to the title they assumed, there should be added the words, "representing the universal church." This seemed very reasonable and consistent; for it is only upon the ground that general councils represent the universal church,

that that special appropriation of the scriptural promises of the presence of Christ and His Spirit, on which their alleged infallibility rests, is based. This phrase, however, was particularly unsavoury to the Popes and their legates, as it reminded them very unpleasantly of the proceedings of the Councils of Constance and Basle in the preceding century; for these councils had based, upon the ground that they represented the universal church, their great principle of the superiority of a council over a Pope, and of its right to exercise jurisdiction over him; and the Papal party succeeded, though not without difficulty, in excluding the expression.

It would, indeed, have been rather a bold step, however consistent, if the members of the Council of Trent had assumed the designation "representing the universal church;" for they were few in number, and a large proportion of them belonged to Italy,—being, indeed, just the creatures and hired agents of the Popes, and some of them having been made bishops with mere titular dioceses, just for the purpose of being sent to Trent, that they might vote as the Popes directed them. In the fourth session,—when the council passed its decrees upon the rule of faith, committing the church, for the first time, to the following positions, of some of which many learned Romanists have since been ashamed, though they did not venture openly to oppose them,—viz., that unwritten traditions are of equal authority with the written word; that the apocryphal books of the Old Testament are canonical; that it belongs to the church to interpret Scripture, and that this must be done according to the unanimous consent of the fathers; and that the Vulgate Latin is to be held authentic in all controversies,—there were only about fifty bishops present, and a minority of these were opposed to some of the decisions pronounced.* During most of the sittings of the council there were not two hundred bishops present, and these were almost all Italians, with a few Germans and Spaniards; and during the last sittings, under Pope Pius IV., when the council was fuller than ever before, in consequence of the presence of some French bishops and other causes, the largest number that attended was two hundred and seventy, of whom two-thirds—one hundred and eighty-seven—were Italians, thirty-

* Waterworth, Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. Historical Essays, Pt. ii., p. xciii.

one Spaniards, twenty-six French, and twenty-six from all the rest of the universal church.*

If *all* œcumenical councils are infallible, and if the Council of Trent was œcumenical, and if all this can be demonstrated *a priori*, then of course we are bound to submit implicitly to all its decisions; but Protestants have generally been of opinion that there was nothing about the Council of Trent which seemed to afford anything like probable grounds for the conviction, that it was either œcumenical or infallible. It was certainly, in point of numbers, a very inadequate representative of the universal church. The men of whom it was composed had not, in general, much about them which, according to the ordinary principles of judgment, should entitle their decisions to great respect and deference. The influences under which the proceedings of the council were regulated, and the manner in which they were conducted, were not such as to inspire much confidence in the soundness of the conclusions to which they came. In short, the history of the Council of Trent is just an epitome or miniature of the history of the Church of Rome; exhibiting on the part of the Popes and their immediate adherents, and, indeed, on the part of the council itself,—for the Popes substantially succeeded in managing its affairs as they wished, though sometimes not without difficulty,—determined opposition to God's revealed will, and to the interests of truth and godliness, and a most unscrupulous prosecution of their own selfish and unworthy ends; indeed, all deceivableness of unrighteousness—the great scriptural characteristic of the mystery of iniquity. There is a very remarkable passage in Calvin's admirable treatise, "De necessitate Reformandæ Ecclesiæ," published in 1544, the year before the Council first assembled, in which he describes minutely by anticipation what the council, if it were allowed to meet, would do, how its proceedings would be conducted, and what would be the result of its deliberations; and it would not be easy to find an instance in which a prediction proceeding from ordinary human sagacity was more fully and exactly accomplished.† Abundant materials to establish its accuracy are to be found not only in Father

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* Con. Trident, p. 404. Waterworth (p. ccxliii.) makes the number of prelates at the last session 255, and this is the largest number he gives at any session.

† Tractatus, p. 62. Amstel. 1667.

Paul, but in Pallavicino himself, and in other trustworthy Romish authorities.

Hallam, in his "History of the Literature of Europe during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," has, in his great candour, made some statements about the Council of Trent, of which the Papists boast as concessions of "an eminent Protestant authority," though I really do not know that Hallam had any other claim to be called a Protestant, except that he was not a Romanist. He says,* "No general council ever contained so many persons of eminent learning and ability as that of Trent; nor is there ground for believing that any other ever investigated the questions before it with so much patience, acuteness, temper, and desire of truth. . . . . Let those who have imbibed a different opinion ask themselves whether they have read Sarpi"—*i.e.*, Father Paul—"through with any attention, especially as to those sessions of the Tridentine Council which preceded its suspension in 1547;" and he intimates that he regards this view as diametrically opposed to the representations usually given of the subject by Protestants. Now, in regard to this statement of Hallam's, we have to remark, first, that there is good ground to regard it as representing the council in too favourable a light; and, secondly, that there is not at bottom *much* in it which Protestants in general have disputed, or have any interest in disputing. That the Council of Trent contained some men of eminent learning and ability is undoubtedly true, and has never been questioned. The Church of Rome has almost always had some men of great learning and ability to defend its cause. That it contained at least as many men of learning and ability as any of the previous general councils,—most of them held in times when these qualifications were not particularly abundant,—may also be admitted as highly probable, if we may be allowed to except the first Council of Nice. There is no reason, however, to think, as Hallam alleges, that the Council of Trent contained *many* men of this description. There is good reason to believe that the learning and ability which existed were to be found much more among the divines and the generals of monastic orders, who were present merely as counsellors or assessors, than among the bishops, who were the only proper judges of the points that came before the council

* Hallam, vol. i., p. 540.

for decision.* It is plain, indeed, from the whole of Father Paul's history, that though there was much disputation in the council upon a great variety of topics, this was confined to a very small number of individuals,—there being apparently but few, comparatively, who were qualified to take part in the discussions. There were very few men in the Council of Trent who have been known in subsequent times for anything except their being members of that council,—very few who have acquired for themselves any distinguished or lasting reputation in theological literature.

Still, that there were men in the Council of Trent who were well acquainted with the fathers and the schoolmen, and who were able to discuss, and did discuss, the questions that came before them, with much ability and acuteness, is undeniable. Father Paul's history fully establishes this, and no Protestant, so far as I know, has ever, as Hallam seems to think, disputed it. As to the alleged patience, temper, and desire of truth with which the discussions were conducted, it is admitted that Father Paul's history does not contain a great deal that openly and palpably disproves the allegation, so far as the divines who usually took part in the discussions were concerned. And this ought to be regarded as an evidence that Father Paul did not studiously make it his object, as Romanists allege, to bring the council into contempt; for it is a curious fact that Cardinal Pallavicino, the professed advocate of the council, whose work Hallam admits† he had never read, brings out some facts, not noticed by Father Paul, which give no very favourable impression of the patience and temper of some of the fathers: as, for instance, of one bishop, in the course of a discussion, seizing another by the throat, and tearing his beard; and of the presiding legate and another cardinal who was opposed to the interests of the Pope, discharging against each other fearful torrents of Billingsgate.‡ As to their alleged desire of truth, it is of course not disputed that the fathers of the council honestly believed the doctrinal decisions which they pronounced to be true, —that where a difference of opinion appeared upon any point, they laboured to convince those who differed from them of their

* This is expressly asserted by Father Paul, the authority to whom he refers. Liv. ii., lxvi. Courayer, tome i., pp. 311–12.

† Hallam, p. 364.

‡ Pallavicin. Lib. viii., c. 6. Fleury, Liv. cxliii., sec. 56.

error, and did occasionally succeed on some minor points in producing a conviction to this effect. The theologians who guided the doctrinal decisions of the Council of Trent, no doubt represented fairly enough the theological sentiments that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome before the council assembled. Those of them who had studied theological subjects were of course acquainted with the Protestant arguments before the council was called; and the Reformers certainly did not expect that the council would make their opponents sounder theologians, or more disposed to submit to scriptural evidence, than they had been before. They appeared in the council just as they had done in their polemical writings against the Reformers; and they certainly afforded no evidence that, in virtue of the supposed presiding agency of the Holy Ghost, they either had a greater desire of truth, or actually attained it more fully than formerly.

Protestants, then, do not dispute that the Council of Trent contained some men of eminent learning and ability; that the doctrinal decisions of the council were in accordance with what the great body of its members really believed to be true; and that considerable pains were taken to put forth their doctrines in the most unobjectionable and plausible form. The leading general statement which Protestants are accustomed to make in regard to the Council of Trent, so far as this aspect of it is concerned, is in substance this,—that there is nothing about it that entitles its decisions to any great respect or deference; and the main grounds upon which they hold this conviction are these:—that its members were few in number, viewed as representing the universal church; that they were not, *in general*, men at all distinguished for piety, learning, and ability; that, on the contrary, the great body of them were grossly and notoriously deficient in those qualities; that a large proportion of them were the mere creatures of the Pope, ready to vote for whatever he might wish; that the general management of the proceedings of the council was regulated by the Court of Rome, with a view to the promotion of its own selfish interests; that when difficulties arose upon any points in which these interests were, or were supposed to be, involved, all means, foul or fair, were employed to protect them; and that such was the skill of those who, in the Pope's name, presided over the council, and such the character and the motives of the majority of those who composed it,—that *these* means, directed to *this* end,

seldom if ever failed of success. *All this* has been established by the most satisfactory historical evidence; and when this has been proved, it is abundantly sufficient to warrant the conclusion, that the decisions of such a body, so composed, so circumstanced, so influenced, are entitled to but little respect; that there is no very strong antecedent presumption in favour of their soundness; and that they may be examined and tested with all freedom, and without any overpowering sense of the sacredness of the ground on which we are treading.

The two main objects for which the council was professedly called, were,—to decide on the theological questions which had been raised by the Reformers, and to reform the practical corruptions and abuses which it was admitted prevailed in the Church of Rome itself; and its proceedings are divided into two heads,—doctrine and reformation,—the latter forming much the larger portion of its recorded proceedings. It was chiefly on the topics connected with the reformation of the church that the influence of the Pope was brought to bear,—for it was these chiefly that affected his interests; and it was mainly the proceedings upon some of the subjects that rank under this head, which brought out the true character of the men of whom the council was composed, and the influences under which its proceedings were conducted. The Popes were not much concerned about the precise deliverances that might be given upon points of doctrine, except indeed those which might bear upon the government of the church. Upon other doctrinal subjects, it was enough for them to be satisfied that, from the known sentiments of the members of which the council was composed, their decisions would be in opposition to all the leading principles advanced by the Reformers, and in accordance with the theological views that then generally prevailed in the Church of Rome. Satisfied of this, and not caring much more about the matter, the Popes left the theologians of the council to follow very much their own convictions and impressions upon questions purely doctrinal; and this gave to the discussions upon these topics a degree of freedom and independence, which, had any unworthy interests of the Court of Rome been involved in them, would most certainly have been checked.

The accounts given by Father Paul of the discussions that took place in the council upon doctrinal subjects are very interesting and important, as throwing much light both upon the general state

of theological sentiment that then obtained in the Church of Rome, and also upon the meaning and objects of the decrees and canons which were ultimately adopted; and, indeed, a perusal of them may be regarded as almost indispensable to a *thorough* and minute acquaintance with the theology of the Church of Rome as settled by the Council of Trent. There are two interesting considerations of a general kind which they suggest, neither of them very accordant with "the desire of truth" which Hallam is pleased to ascribe to the council,—first, that the diversity of opinion on important questions, elicited in the discussion, was sometimes so great as apparently to preclude the possibility of their coming to a harmonious decision, which yet seems somehow to have been generally effected; and, secondly, that a considerable number of the doctrines broached and maintained by the Reformers were supported by some members at least in substance, although it seems in general to have been received *by the great body of the council* as quite a sufficient argument against the truth of a doctrine, that it was maintained by the Protestants. The great objects which the council seems to have kept in view in their doctrinal or theological decisions were these,—first, to make their condemnation of the doctrines of the Reformers as full and complete as possible; and, secondly, to avoid as much as they could condemning any of those doctrines which had been matter of controversial discussion among the scholastic theologians, and on which difference of opinion still subsisted among themselves. It was not always easy to combine these objects; and the consequence is, that on many points the decisions of the Council of Trent are expressed with deliberate and intentional ambiguity. The truth of this position is established at once by an examination of the decrees and canons themselves, and by the history both of the discussions which preceded their formation, and of the disputes to which they have since given rise in the Church of Rome itself. It was probably this, with the awkward consequences to which it was seen that it was likely to lead, that induced Pope Pius IV., in his bull confirming the council, to forbid all, even ecclesiastical persons, of whatever order, condition, or degree, upon any pretext whatever, and under the severest penalties, to publish any commentaries, glosses, annotations, scholia, or any sort of interpretation upon the decrees of the council, without Papal authority; while, at the same time, he directed that, if any one found anything in the

decrees that was obscure, or needed explanation, he should go up to the place which the Lord had chosen,—the Apostolic See, the mistress of all the faithful.

It cannot be denied that a great deal of skill and ingenuity were displayed in the preparation of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and that advantage had been taken of the discussions which had taken place since the commencement of the Reformation to introduce greater care and caution into the statement and exposition of doctrine, and thus ward off the force of some of the arguments of the Reformers. There is certainly not nearly so much Pelagianism in the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent,—so much of what plainly and palpably contradicts the fundamental doctrines of Scripture,—as appears in the writings of the earlier Romish opponents of Luther, though there is enough to entitle us to charge the Church of Rome with perverting the gospel of the grace of God, and subverting the scriptural method of salvation.

The canons of the council, as distinguished from the decrees, consist wholly of anathemas against the doctrines ascribed to the Reformers. And here a good deal of unfairness has been practised: advantage has been taken, to a considerable extent, of some of the rash, exaggerated, and paradoxical statements of Luther, much in the same way as in the first bull of Pope Leo condemning him; and in this way statements are, with some appearance of authority, ascribed to Protestants which they do not acknowledge, for which they are not responsible, and which are not at all necessary for the exposition and maintenance of their principles. Leo, in his bull, which was directed avowedly against Luther by name, might be entitled to take up any statement that he had made; and Luther did not complain, in regard to any one of the statements charged upon him, that he had not made it. But it was unfair in the Council of Trent to take advantage of Luther's rash and unguarded statements, for exciting odium against Protestants in general, who had now explained their doctrines with care and accuracy.

A further artifice resorted to by the Council of Trent in their canons condemning Protestant doctrines, is to take a doctrine which Protestants generally held and acknowledged,—to couple it with some one of the more extreme and exaggerated statements of Luther or of some one else,—and then to include them both

under one and the same anathema, evidently for the purpose of laying the odium of the more objectionable statements upon the other which accompanied it. Some of these observations we may afterwards have occasion to illustrate by examples; but our object at present is merely to give a brief summary of the leading general points that should be remembered concerning the decrees and canons of the council, and kept in view and applied in the investigation of them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE FALL.

The decrees and canons of the Council of Trent exhibit the solemn and official judgment of the Church of Rome, which claims to be regarded as the one holy, catholic church of Christ, on the principal doctrines which were deduced by the Reformers from the word of God. The first decision of the council upon doctrinal controversial points is that which treats of the rule of faith; but on the consideration of this subject I do not intend to enter. The next was the decree of the fifth session, which professes to treat of original sin; and to the consideration of this topic, in so far as it formed a subject of discussion between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, I propose now to direct attention.

Sec. I.—*Popish and Protestant Views.*

The phrase Original Sin,—*peccatum originis*, or *peccatum originale*,—is used by theologians in two different senses; the things, however, described by it in the two cases differing from each other only as a part does from a whole, and the words, consequently, being used either in a more extended or in a more restricted sense. Sometimes the phrase is employed as a general comprehensive description of all the different elements or ingredients that constitute the sinfulness of the state into which man, through Adam's transgression, fell; and sometimes as denoting only the moral corruption or depravity of his nature, the inherent and universal bias or tendency of man, as he comes into the world, to violate God's laws, which, being the immediate or proximate cause of all actual transgressions, constitutes practically the most important and fundamental feature of his natural condition of sinfulness. It is in this latter and more restricted sense

that the phrase is most commonly employed, and it is in this sense that it is used in the standards of our church. The *words* original sin, indeed, are not directly used in the Confession of Faith, but they occur both in the Larger and the Shorter Catechisms; and though, in the Shorter Catechism, it might be doubted, as a mere question of grammatical construction, whether the words, "which is commonly called original sin," applied only to the "corruption of his whole nature," which is the immediate antecedent, or included also the other ingredient or constituent elements of the sinfulness of the state into which man fell, which had been also previously mentioned,—viz., the guilt of Adam's first sin, and the want of original righteousness,—yet any ambiguity in this respect is removed in the fuller exposition given under the corresponding question in the Larger Catechism, where it is plain that the statement made as to the common meaning of the words "original sin," applies it only to the corruption of our nature,—the inherent depravity which is the immediate source of actual transgressions. This observation, however, regards only the meaning of a particular phrase, for the whole of the elements or ingredients of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, are usually expounded and discussed in systems of theology under the general head *De Peccato;* and it is impossible fully to understand the doctrine of Scripture in regard to any one division or department of the subject, without having respect to what it teaches concerning the rest.

The subject of the moral character and condition of man, both before and after the fall,—treated commonly by modern continental writers under the designation of Anthropology,—was very fully discussed by the schoolmen; and in their hands the doctrine of Scripture, as expounded by Augustine, had been very greatly corrupted, and the real effects of the fall—the sinfulness of man's natural condition—had been very much explained away. The doctrine which was generally taught in the Church of Rome, at the commencement of the Reformation, upon this subject, the Reformers condemned as unscriptural,—as Pelagian in its character,—as tending towards rendering the work of Christ, and the whole arrangements of the scheme of redemption, unnecessary and superfluous,—and as laying a foundation for men's either effecting their own salvation, or at least *meriting* at God's hand the grace that is necessary for accomplishing this result. And

yet, when the Reformers explained their doctrine upon this subject, in the Confession of Augsburg and other documents, the Romanists professed that they did not differ very materially from it, except in one point, to be afterwards noticed; and on several occasions, when conferences were held, with the view of bringing about a reconciliation or adjustment between the parties, there was much that seemed to indicate that they might have come to an agreement upon this point, so far as concerned the terms in which the substance of the doctrine should be expressed. The substance, indeed, of what the Scriptures teach, and of what the Reformers proclaimed, in regard to the bearing of Adam's fall upon his posterity, and the natural state and condition of man as fallen, had been so fully brought out by Augustine in his controversy with the Pelagians, and had through his influence been so generally received and professed by the church of the fifth and sixth centuries, that it was quite impossible for the Church of Rome, unless she openly and avowedly renounced her professed principle of following the authority of the fathers and the tradition of the early church, to deviate far from the path of sound doctrine upon this subject. It was, however, no easy matter to combine, in any decision upon this subject, the different and sometimes not very compatible objects which the Council of Trent usually laboured to keep in view in its doctrinal deliverances,—viz., to condemn the doctrines of the Reformers, and to avoid as much as possible condemning either Augustine or the leading schoolmen, who still had their followers in the Church of Rome, and in the council itself.

Their decree upon this subject consists of five sections, of which the first three are directed only against the Pelagians, and are acknowledged by Protestants to contain scriptural truth, so far as they go,—though they are defective and somewhat ambiguous; the fourth is directed against the Anabaptists; while the fifth alone strikes upon any position which had been generally maintained by the Reformers, and is still generally held by Protestant churches. The Protestants exposed the unreasonableness and folly of the council beginning its doctrinal decisions with a condemnation of heresies which had been condemned by the church for above a thousand years; and which, except in the article of the denial of infant baptism, had not been revived by any in the course of those theological discussions on which the council was avowedly called upon to decide. "Quorsum obsecro,"

says Calvin upon this very point,—for we have the privilege of having from his pen what he calls an "Antidote" to the proceedings of the first seven sessions of the council, those held under Paul III., a work of very great interest and value,—"Quorsum obsecro attinebat tot anathemata detonare, nisi ut imperiti crederent aliquid subesse causæ cum tamen nihil sit." Although Protestants have admitted that the first four sections of the decree of the Council of Trent are sound and scriptural, so far as they go, and could be rejected, in substance at least, only by Pelagians and Anabaptists, they have usually complained of them as giving a very defective account, or more properly on account at all, of the real nature and constituent elements of original sin, or rather of the sinfulness of man's natural condition in consequence of the fall. This complaint is undoubtedly well founded; and the true reason why the subject was left in this very loose and unsatisfactory condition was, that a considerable diversity of opinion upon these points prevailed in the council itself, and the fathers were afraid to give any deliverance regarding them. Indeed, upon this very occasion, Father Paul,*—from whose narrative Hallam, as we have seen, formed so favourable an opinion of the ability and learning of the council, and of the desire of truth by which its members were actuated,—tells us that, while some members strongly urged that it was unworthy of a general council to put forth a mere condemnation of errors upon so important a subject, without an explicit statement of the opposite truths, the generality of the bishops (few of whom, he says, were skilled in theology) were not able to comprehend the discussions in which the theologians indulged in their presence, about the nature and constituent elements of men's natural condition of sinfulness, and were very anxious that the decrees should contain a mere rejection of errors, without a positive statement of truth, and should be expressed in such vague and general terms as should contain no deliverance upon these knotty points, lest they should do mischief by their decision, without being aware of it. So that it would seem that the honest ignorance and stupidity of the great body of the members of the council contributed, as well as reasons of policy, to the formation of the decree upon original sin, in the vague and unsatisfactory form in which we find it.

* Father Paul, Liv. ii., sec. lxvi., pp. 311, 312.

The council began their investigation of each doctrinal topic by collecting from the writings of the Reformers a number of propositions, which appeared to them *prima facie* erroneous, in order that their truth might be carefully examined and decided upon; and it is remarkable, that in the propositions selected from the writings of the Reformers to be the groundwork of the decree on original sin, as given by Father Paul,* there are several important doctrines laid down in regard to the nature and constituent elements of man's natural and original sinfulness, on which, in the decree ultimately adopted by the council, no decision, favourable or unfavourable, was pronounced.

The substance of the scriptural truth taught by the Council of Trent,—and, of course, still professedly held by the Church of Rome,—on the subject of original sin, in opposition to the Pelagians, is this: that Adam's first sin caused or effected a most important and injurious change upon the moral character and condition of himself and of his posterity; that he thereby lost the holiness and righteousness which he had received from God, and lost it not for himself alone, but also for us; that he transmitted (*transfudisse*) to the whole human race not only temporal death, and other bodily sufferings of a penal kind, but also sin, which is the death of the soul; and that the ruinous effects of the fall upon man's moral and spiritual condition cannot be repaired by any powers of human nature, or by any other remedy except the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, all this is true, or accordant with the word of God; and it has been held by all Protestants, except those whom Protestants have usually regarded as not entitled to the name of Christians,—I mean the Socinians. The truth thus declared by the Council of Trent might be fairly enough regarded as embracing the sum and substance, the leading and essential features, of what is made known to us in Scripture with respect to the fall of man, and its bearing upon his moral condition; and Calvin, accordingly, in his Antidote, did not charge the doctrine of the council, thus far, even with being defective. Indeed, it may be remarked, in general, that the first Reformers did not speculate very largely or minutely upon the more abstract questions directly comprehended under the subject of original sin, being mainly anxious about some important *in-*

* Liv. ii., sec. lxiii., pp. 300, 301.

ferences deducible from man's natural state of sinfulness, which bore more directly upon the topics of free-will, grace, and merit; though it is also true, as I have already observed, that the fathers of Trent had before them certain doctrines taught by the Reformers, in regard to the nature of original sin, which they thought proper to pass by, without either approving or condemning them.

It came out, however, in the course of subsequent discussions, that certain corrupt notions in regard to original sin, which had been held by some of the schoolmen, but which *seemed* to be condemned, by implication at least, by the Council of Trent, were still taught by leading Popish divines, who contended that the council had intentionally abstained from deciding these questions —had used vague and general words on purpose—and had thus left free room for speculation and difference of opinion; and Protestant theologians were thus led to see that, even for the maintenance of the practical conclusions bearing upon the subjects of free-will, grace, and merit,—about which the Reformers were chiefly concerned,—a more minute and exact exposition of the nature and constituent elements of original sin was necessary. This, together with the discussions excited by the Synergistic controversy in the Lutheran church, and by the entire denial of original sin by the Socinians, towards the end of the sixteenth century, led to a fuller and more detailed investigation of the subject by Protestant divines, and produced those more minute and precise expositions of the real nature and constituent elements of man's natural condition of sinfulness, which are fully set forth in the writings of the great theologians of the seventeenth century,—which have since been generally embraced by orthodox churches, —and which the compilers of our standards regarded as so important, that they embodied them even in the Shorter Catechism, among the fundamental articles of Christian doctrine. There, the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell is declared to consist "in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which (viz., the corruption of nature) is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it." As this doctrine, in substance, though certainly not so precisely and definitely expressed, was under the view of the Council of Trent, as having been taught by the Reformers,—and as one leading defect of the

decree they adopted was, that it gave no explicit deliverance regarding it,—it is in entire accordance with our present object, and may not be unprofitable, to make a few explanatory observations upon this view of the nature and constituent elements of man's natural condition of sinfulness introduced by the fall.

Sec. II. *Guilt of Adam's First Sin.*

The first ingredient or constituent element of the sinfulness of man's natural condition, is the guilt of Adam's first sin. Now, the general meaning of this is, that men, as they come into the world, are, in point of fact, in such a position that the guilt of Adam's first sin is imputed to them, or put down to their account; so that they are regarded and treated by God as if they themselves, each of them, had been guilty of the sin which Adam committed in eating the forbidden fruit. If this be indeed the case, then the guilt of Adam's first sin, imputed to his posterity or charged to their account, is an actual feature of their natural condition of sinfulness; and, from the nature of the case, it must be the origin and foundation of the other ingredients or constituent elements of this condition. If true at all, it is the first and most important thing that *is* true about men, that they sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his first transgression.

It is true, indeed, that, in a synthetic exposition of men's natural estate of sin, the attention would naturally be directed, in the first place, to the actual personal moral character and tendencies of men as they come into the world, and to the actual transgressions of God's law, of which they are all guilty,—a subject which is not so entirely one of pure revelation, on which a variety of evidence from different sources can be brought to bear, and in the investigation of which an appeal can be made for materials of proof more directly to men's own consciousness, and to experience and observation. But when the actual corruption and depravity of man's moral nature, and the universality of actual transgressions of God's law, as certainly resulting from this feature of their natural character, are established from Scripture, consciousness, and experience, it must be evident that the doctrine that, in virtue of God's arrangements, the human race was federally represented by Adam, and was tried in him,—so that the guilt of his first sin is imputed to them, and they are in consequence re-

garded and treated by God as if they had themselves committed it,—is so far from introducing any additional difficulty into the matter, that it rather tends somewhat to elucidate and explain a subject which is undoubtedly difficult and mysterious, and in its full bearings lying beyond the cognizance of the human faculties. The federal connection subsisting between Adam and his posterity,—the bearing of his first transgression upon their moral character and condition,—the doctrine that God intended and regarded the trial of Adam as the trial of the human race, and imputed the guilt of his first sin to them,—is undoubtedly a matter of pure revelation, which men could never have discovered, unless God had made it known to them; but which, when once ascertained from Scripture, does go some length to explain and account for—to bring into greater conformity with principles which we can in some measure understand and estimate—*phenomena which actually exist*, and which must be admitted, because their existence can be proved, even though no approach could be made towards explaining or accounting for them. And when it is ascertained from Scripture that all mankind sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his first transgression, then the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them, or held and reckoned as theirs, to the effect of making them legally responsible for its consequences,—legally liable to condemnation and punishment,—is naturally and properly placed first in an *analytic* exposition of the sinfulness of men's natural condition.

The imputation of the guilt or *reatus* of Adam's first sin to his posterity, as the basis and ground in fact, and the explanation or *rationale pro tanto* in speculative discussion, of their being involved in actual depravity, misery, and ruin, through his fall, was certainly not denied by the Council of Trent. On the contrary, it seems to be fairly implied or assumed in their decree, though it cannot be said to be very explicitly asserted. Indeed, the position which this doctrine held at that time in controversial discussion, was materially different from that which it has generally occupied at subsequent periods; and some explanation of this point is necessary, in order to our understanding and estimating aright the statements of some of the Reformers on this subject. An impression generally prevails amongst us,—countenanced, perhaps, to a certain extent, by some of the aspects which the controversy on this subject has occasionally assumed in modern times,—that the

doctrine that men are involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin,—that that sin was imputed to his posterity,—is the highest point of ultra-Calvinism,—a doctrine which the more moderate and reasonable Calvinists—including, it is often alleged, Calvin himself—rejected; and that it is the darkest and most mysterious view that has ever been presented of men's moral condition by nature; while yet the fact is certain, that, at the time of the Reformation, this doctrine was held by many Romanists,—by some of the theologians of the Council of Trent, who were not Calvinists,—and that it was applied by them for the purpose of softening and mitigating, or rather of explaining away, the sinfulness of men's natural condition.

It is true that there have been Calvinistic theologians who, admitting the entire corruption of the moral nature which men bring with them into the world, and the universality of actual transgression of God's law as certainly resulting from it, have not admitted the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and this fact has contributed to strengthen the impression which I have described. They have, however, taken up this position just because they have not discovered what they count sufficient evidence of this imputation in Scripture. Now, it is conceded that there is a greater variety and amount of positive evidence, not only from Scripture, but also from other sources, for the actual moral depravity of men's nature, and for the universality of actual sins in their conduct, than for the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity. It is also conceded that the admission of the existence and universal prevalence of a corrupt moral nature,—and, as a certain consequence of this, of actual transgressions,—in all men, is of greater practical importance, in its natural and legitimate bearing upon men's general views and impressions with respect to the scheme of salvation and their own immediate personal duty, than a belief of the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin. But it seems plain enough that the doctrine of the actual moral depravity of men's nature,—certainly and invariably producing in all of them actual transgressions which subject them to God's wrath and curse,—as describing an actual feature of their natural condition, is really, when taken by itself, and unconnected with the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, in some respects more mysterious and incomprehensible than when the doctrine of imputation is received to furnish some explanation

and account of it. The final appeal, of course, must be made to Scripture: the question must be decided by ascertaining whether or not the word of God teaches the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and on this we are not called upon here to enlarge. But there is certainly nothing more awful, or mysterious, or incomprehensible, in the one doctrine than in the other; and there is no ground whatever why the rejection of the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity, as distinguished from that of their universal moral depravity as an actual feature in their condition, should be held to indicate, as many seem to suppose it does, moderation and caution, or an aversion to presumptuous and dangerous speculations.*

The Council of Trent, though not giving any very explicit deliverance upon this subject, has at least left it free to Romanists to profess and maintain, if they choose, the views in regard to the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity which have been usually held by Calvinistic divines; and those Romish theologians who have made the nearest approach to sound Protestant doctrine upon other points, have uniformly spoken very much like Calvinists upon this point. Even Cardinal Bellarmine, though he showed no leaning to the comparatively sound theology taught in his own time by Baius, and more fully in the seventeenth century by Jansenius, has laid down positions upon this department of the sinfulness of the state into which man fell, which contain the whole substance of what the strictest Calvinists usually contend for. He expressly asserts that the first sin of Adam, "omnibus imputatur, qui ex Adamo nascuntur, quoniam omnes in lumbis Adami existentes in eo, et per eum peccavimus, cùm ipse peccavit;" and again, "in omnibus nobis, cùm primùm homines esse incipimus, præter imputationem inobedientiæ Adami, esse etiam similem perversionem, et obliquitatem unicuique inhærentem." Upon the assumption of taking *peccatum* to mean an actual transgression of God's law, he would define the original sin of mankind to be "prima Adami inobedientia, ab ipso Adamo commissa, non ut erat singularis persona, sed ut personam totius generis humani gerebat;" and, lastly, he makes the following very important statement, most fully confirming one of the leading positions which we have endeavoured to illustrate:—"Nisi

* See "The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation," p. 377.—Edrs.

enim ponamus, nos in Adamo, et cum Adamo verè peccasse, nulla ratione explicari poterit, quomodo in parvulis recèns natis sit aliqua vera culpa: et hoc Catholicum dogma non tam supra rationem, quam contra rationem esse videbitur. Nam quidquid dicamus in parvulis ex peccato Adami hærere, sive reatum, sive aversionem, sive gratiæ privationem, sive quid aliud; illud nullo modo parvulis vitio dari, ac ne esse quidem poterit, nisi processerit ab actione liberâ, cujus actionis illi aliquo modo participes fuerint." And, after reasoning at some length in support of this position, he concludes,—"Maneat igitur quod supra diximus, non posse in parvulis aliquid esse, quod habeat culpæ rationem, nisi participes fuerint etiam ipsi prævaricationis Adæ."*

We propose now to notice the discussions which have subsequently taken place among Protestants as to the right mode of explaining the bearing of Adam's first sin upon the character and condition of his posterity; and from this we hope it will appear that those who have denied the doctrine of imputation in words, have either been obliged to admit it in substance, or else have fallen into greater difficulties in the exposition of their views than those which they were labouring to avoid.

That Adam's first sin exerted some influence upon the condition of his posterity, and that this influence was of an injurious or deteriorating kind, is so plainly taught in the Bible, that it has been admitted by all who have professed to believe in the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures, except Socinians and Rationalists, whose denial of original sin in any sense, combined with their denial of the divinity and atonement of Christ, warrants us in asserting that, whatever they may sometimes profess or allege, they do not truly and honestly take the word of God for their guide. Modern Rationalists indeed, to do them justice, admit frankly enough that the doctrine of original sin, including even the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, was plainly taught by the Apostle Paul; while they do not regard *this* as affording any sufficient reason why *they* should believe it. Wegscheider

* De Amissione Gratiæ et Statu Peccati, Lib. v., c. xvii. et xviii.; Opera, tom. iv. Garissole adduced the authority of Bellarmine against Placæus' denial of immediate and antecedent imputation. See Placæus, De Imputatione primi peccati Adami, P. i., c. x., p. 125; and Pars ii., c. xiv.

On these statements of Bellarmine, see Parei Bellarmini de Amiss. Grat. et Statu Pecc. Libri sex explicati et castigati, pp. 859–69.

admits that it is impossible, in accordance with the principles of philology and exegesis, to deny that Paul taught this doctrine; while yet he does not scruple to say, "Imputatio illa peccati Adamitici, quam Paulus Apostolus, sui temporis doctores Judæos secutus, argumentationibus suis subjecit, ad obsoleta dogmata relegenda est, quæ et philosophiæ et historiæ ignorantia in magnum veræ pietatis detrimentum per ecclesiam propagavit et aluit." *

Among those, however, who have made a somewhat more *credible* profession of receiving the sacred Scriptures as a rule of faith,—and who, in consequence, have admitted the general position, that the fall of Adam exerted some injurious influence upon the condition of his posterity,—there has been a great diversity of opinion, both as to what the effects were which resulted from that event, and as to the nature of the connection subsisting between it and the effects which in some way or other flowed from it. Some have held that the only effect entailed by Adam's sin upon his posterity was temporal death, with the bodily infirmities and sufferings which lead to it, and the sorrows and afflictions which its universal prevalence implies or produces. Others have held that, in addition to this, it introduced, and in some way transmitted, a deteriorated moral nature, or otherwise placed men in more unfavourable circumstances; so that their discharge of the duties which God requires of them is more difficult than in Adam's case, and is marked to a greater extent, and more frequently, if not universally, by failure or shortcoming, than it would have been had Adam not fallen. And under this general head there is room for many gradations of sentiment as to the extent of the deterioration, the strength and prevalence of the tendencies and influences that lead men to commit sin, and involve them in the actual commission of it,—gradations approaching indefinitely near, either to the first view already explained, or to the third now about to be stated. A third class, believing in the entire corruption of the moral nature which all men bring with them into the world, and in the universality of actual transgressions of God's law, regard all this, upon the testimony of Scripture, as in some way or other caused or occasioned by Adam's sin. It is obvious enough that those who advocate the first two of these views,—com-

* Institutiones Theologiæ Christianæ Dogmaticæ, P. iii., c. i., pp. 370 and 386, edit. sexta. 1829.

prehending almost all who are commonly classed under the name of Arminians,—have just ascribed to the fall of Adam as much as they thought it could fairly and justly bear; and that,—as they felt constrained by the testimony of Scripture to regard as in some way or other connected with Adam's sin, whatever of sin and suffering actually existed among men,—they have been somewhat influenced in their views as to the actual facts or phenomena of men's condition, by certain notions as to the possibility of admitting Adam's sin as in some way explaining or accounting for them. This mode of contemplating the subject, however, is unreasonable, and is fitted to lead into error. The right mode of dealing with it is just to investigate, fully and unshrinkingly, the actual facts and phenomena of the case; to find out thoroughly and accurately, by a fair and fearless application of all competent means of information, what the moral character and condition of men are; and then to consider what can be ascertained as to the cause or origin of this state of things. There would not, we think, have been so many who would have denied that man's moral nature is at all corrupted, had it not been for the perverting influence of the impression that, consistently with justice, Adam *could* not have transmitted to his posterity any evils but such as were of a merely temporal character; and more would probably have yielded to the strength of the evidence from Scripture and observation in support of the entire depravity of men's moral nature, and the certainty and universality of actual transgressions, had it not been for the fancied difficulty of connecting in any way this state of things, if admitted, with the first sin of the first man.

We are not, however, at present considering the general subject of the actual moral character and condition of men by nature, but only the guilt of Adam's first sin, and the nature of the connection subsisting between that event and the effects which in some way flowed from it. And in doing so, we will assume for the present the truth of the third and last of the views we have stated,—that, viz., which, upon most abundant grounds, furnished both by Scripture and experience, represents the moral nature of men as wholly depraved, and as certainly leading, in every instance of a human being who attains to the age and condition of moral responsibility, to actual transgressions of God's law. We assume this at present, not merely because we think it can be con-

clusively proved to be the truth,—the actual state of the case,—a real phenomenon which exists,—which should be explained and accounted for, if possible, but which must be admitted, whether it can be accounted for or not; but also because it is only upon the assumption that this is the actual state of the case, that the difficulty of accounting for it becomes serious and formidable, and because our chief object at present is merely to show that those who, *admitting all this to be a reality*,—as all Calvinistic divines, and some of the more evangelical Arminians, have done,—yet deny the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity, do not thereby escape from any real difficulty, and only introduce greater darkness and mystery into the whole matter.

So long as men are regarded as being by nature exposed merely to temporal evils, or as being placed only in unfavourable moral circumstances,—which yet by their own strength, or by some universal grace, either actually furnished or at least made accessible to all men, they can overcome or escape from,—there is no great difficulty in explaining the whole matter by the undoubted right of God, as Creator and Governor of the world, who, *all* must admit, may give to His creatures different degrees of happiness and of privilege as He chooses, provided He does not make their existence upon the whole miserable, a curse and not a blessing, without their having furnished a ground for this by their own demerit. It is otherwise, however, if the case be as Calvinists maintain it is,—viz., that the moral character which all men bring with them into the world is such as certainly and necessarily to lead them into actual transgressions, which, unless divine grace specially interpose, subject them to God's wrath and curse, not only in the life that now is, but also in that which is to come. Here difficulties present themselves which we cannot but feel are not fully solved or explained by God's mere right, as Creator and Governor, to bestow different degrees of happiness and privilege upon His creatures. If the fact, indeed, as to the actual moral character and condition of men be once fully established, we may need to resolve it, for want of any further explanation, into the divine sovereignty; and even if we could in some measure explain it,—*i.e.*, in the way of pushing the difficulty one or two steps further back, for that is really all that *can* be done on any theory,—we *must* resolve the matter into the divine sovereignty at last. Still, upon the Calvinistic view of the actual phenomena, the real state of the human

race by nature, we cannot but feel that the mere right of God, as Creator, to bestow upon His creatures different degrees of happiness and privilege, does not afford any real solution or explanation of the difficulty; and we are in consequence warranted to inquire if there be any other way of solving it, or of making any approach towards a solution of it.

There have, indeed, been a few Calvinistic divines, more remarkable for their boldness and ingenuity than for the soundness of their judgment,—and among others Dr Twisse, the prolocutor or president of the Westminster Assembly,—who have held that, even upon the Calvinistic view of the facts of the case and their certain results, the matter could be positively explained and vindicated by the principle of God's right to bestow different degrees of happiness and privilege upon His creatures, and have even ventured to take up the extraordinary ground,—*the only one, indeed, on which their position can be maintained*,—viz., that an eternal existence even in misery is a better and more desirable condition than non-existence or annihilation, and is thus, upon the whole, a blessing to the creature, and not a curse; and that, consequently, God may bestow it or effect it as a result of sovereignty, without its being necessary that there should be any previous ground in justice to warrant this. But this notion is so diametrically opposed at once to the common sense and the ordinary feelings of men,—and, what is of far more importance, to the explicit and most solemn and impressive declaration of our Saviour, "Good were it for that man that he had never been born,"—that it has not been generally adopted by Calvinistic divines, and has only served the purpose of furnishing a handle to enemies.

Those, then, who hold the Calvinistic view of the state of the case with respect to the moral character and condition of men, may not unreasonably be asked whether they can give any other account of the origin, or any explanation of the cause, of this fearful state of things. Now, in the history of the discussions which have taken place upon this subject, we can trace *four* pretty distinct courses which have been taken by theologians who all admitted the total native depravity of mankind: First, some have refused to attempt any explanation of the state of the case, beyond the general statement that Scripture represents it as in some way or other connected with, and resulting from, the fall of Adam, and have denied, expressly or by plain implica-

tion, the common Calvinistic doctrine of imputation. A second class, comprehending the great body of Calvinistic divines, have regarded it as, in some measure and to some extent, explained by the principle of its being *a penal infliction* upon men, resulting from the imputation to them of the guilt of Adam's first sin. A third class, while refusing to admit in words the doctrine of imputation, as commonly stated by orthodox divines, have yet put forth such views of the connection between Adam and his posterity, and of the bearing of his first sin upon them, as embody the sum and substance of all, or almost all, that the avowed defenders of the doctrine of imputation intend by it. And, lastly, there is a fourth class, who, while professing in words to hold the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin, yet practically and substantially neutralize it or explain it away, especially by means of a distinction they have devised between immediate or antecedent, and mediate or consequent imputation,—denying the former, which is the only true and proper imputation, and admitting only the latter.

It is quite plain that it is only the first two of these four divisions of theological opinion that can be regarded as important, or even real and substantial. For, on the one hand, those who belong to the third class, though showing an unnecessary fastidiousness as to some portion of the general orthodox phraseology upon this point, and an unnecessary disposition to find fault with some of the details of the doctrine, and with some of the particular aspects in which it has been represented and explained, and thereby lending their aid to injure the interests of sound doctrine, may yet be really ranked under the second class, because they admit the whole substance of what the doctrine of imputation is usually understood to include or involve; while, on the other hand, those who belong to the fourth class, admitting imputation in words, but denying it in reality and substance, belong properly to the first class. Still it is true that these four distinct classes can be plainly enough traced in a survey of the history of the discussions which have taken place upon this subject. It is scarcely necessary to say, that all these various parties profess, while maintaining their different opinions, to be just giving forth the substance of what they respectively believe that Scripture teaches or indicates upon the subject, and that the points in dispute between them can be legitimately and conclusively decided only by a

careful investigation of the true meaning of its statements. We are not called upon here to enter upon this investigation, and can only make a few general observations upon the leading positions.

It is conceded to the supporters of the first view, that the leading position they are accustomed to maintain,—viz., that the facts or phenomena of the case, the universal moral depravity and actual personal guilt or sinfulness of men, being once conclusively established by satisfactory evidence, they are not bound, as a preliminary to, or an accompaniment of, receiving the facts or phenomena as proved, and calling upon others to receive them, to give any account or explanation of the origin or cause of this state of things,—that this position is altogether impregnable, and cannot be successfully assailed. They are entitled to resolve it into the divine sovereignty, without attempting to explain it, and to contend that since this state of things does exist, *it must* be consistent with the character and moral government of God, though we may not be able to unfold this consistency. The supporters of the doctrine of imputation take advantage of this principle, as well as those who differ with them on this point. No man pretends to be able to comprehend or explain the doctrine of the fall of Adam, and its bearing upon the present character and condition of men. All admit that it involves mysteries which human reason, enlightened by divine revelation, cannot fathom; and that, after all our study of Scripture, and all our investigation of the subject, we must resolve the matter into the divine sovereignty, and be content to say, "Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight." All that is contended for by the advocates of the doctrine of imputation is, in general, that Scripture suggests and sanctions certain ideas upon the subject, which commend themselves to our minds as tending somewhat to explain and illustrate this mystery; to interpose one or two steps between the naked facts of the case, and the unfathomable abyss of God's sovereignty; and thereby to bring this subject somewhat into the line of the analogy of things which we can in some measure understand and estimate.

The supporters of the first view are right, so far as they go, in saying that Scripture makes known to us that the first sin of Adam was, in some way or other, connected with the moral character and condition of his posterity,—that the one was in some

way the cause or occasion of the other. But they are wrong in holding that Scripture teaches nothing more upon the subject than this, and, more particularly, in holding that it gives no sanction to the doctrine of imputation, as commonly held by Calvinistic divines. We cannot admit that this vague and indefinite statement of theirs, though undoubtedly true so far as it goes, fills up or exhausts the full import of the apostle's declarations,—that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,—that by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation,—that by one man's disobedience many were made, or constituted, (*κατεστάθησαν*) sinners;* and of other information given us in Scripture upon this point. But we are not called upon to dwell upon this topic; and we proceed to observe that the views which we regard as suggested and sanctioned by Scripture,—*i.e.*, the ideas which go to constitute and to explain the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity,—do tend somewhat to illustrate this mysterious subject, and, at least, do not introduce into it any additional difficulty.

In order to the first sin of Adam exerting any real influence upon the moral character and condition of his posterity, he and they must have been in some sense or respect *one; i.e.*, some species of unity or identity must have subsisted between them, as the ground, or basis, or rationale of the influence exerted, of the effect produced. This is admitted by all; and the question, indeed, may be said to turn mainly upon the nature and foundation of this oneness or identity. Some have supposed that there was a sort of physical oneness or identity between Adam and his descendants, whereby they existed in him as the plant in the seed, or the branches in the root, and thus, existing in him in a sort of literal physical sense, sinned in him and fell with him,—his sin and fall being thus theirs, and of course justly imputed to them, and involving them in its penal results. Augustine seems to have held the idea of a literal personal oneness; and not a few Calvinistic writers have used language that seemed to imply some notion of this sort. Jonathan Edwards certainly gave some countenance to this notion, though he seems to have combined, if not identified, it with the next mentioned species of identity,—that based upon Adam being the progenitor of the human race, and

* Rom. v. 12, 18, 19.

producing beings like himself.* This idea has no sanction from Scripture, and is indeed quite unintelligible as a supposed description of an actual reality. Adam was undoubtedly the actual progenitor of the whole human race, and this certainly constitutes, in a certain sense, a oneness or identity between them. It seems to be a law of nature, that where there is a process of generation, a being should produce one like himself,—of the same nature and general qualities with himself. This natural oneness or identity, viewed in connection with this law, has been applied to explain the bearing of Adam's sin upon his posterity. And the explanation just amounts to this,—that Adam having, by his first sin, become, in the way of natural consequence, or penal infliction, or both, wholly depraved in his own moral nature, transmitted, in accordance with the law above described, the same moral nature, —*i.e.*, one wholly depraved,—to all his descendants. This view is generally adopted by those who deny the doctrine of imputation; but they scarcely venture to put it forth as throwing any real light upon the difficulty, or even changing its position; for, as the laws of nature are just the arrangements or appointments of God,—the modes or channels through which He effects His own purposes,—to put forth this as the explanation of the bearing of Adam's first sin upon the moral character and condition of his posterity, is merely to say, that God established a constitution or system of things, by which it was provided that the moral character which Adam might come to possess should descend to all his posterity; and that as he came, by his first sin, to have a depraved nature, this accordingly descended to all of them. Now, this is really nothing more than stating the matter of fact, *as a matter of fact*, and then tracing the result directly and immediately to a constitution or appointment of God. In short, it just leaves the matter where it found it,—it interposes nothing whatever between the result and the divine sovereignty, and does nothing whatever towards explaining or vindicating that divine constitution or arrangement under which the result has taken place. At the same time, it is to be remembered that the fact that Adam was the natural progenitor of the whole human race is universally

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* *Vide* Princeton Essays, pp. 139, 151. Edwards on Original Sin, P. iv., c. iii. Stapfer, tom. i., p. 236. Payne on Original Sin, Lect. ii., pp. 86–93.

admitted; that it is in no way inconsistent with the doctrine of imputation; and that if any advantage is derivable from the application of the law, that "like begets like," it is possessed as fully by those who believe as by those who deny this doctrine, while those who deny it have no other principle to adduce in explanation.

The peculiarity of the doctrine of imputation, as generally held by Calvinistic divines, is, that it brings in *another* species of oneness or identity as subsisting between Adam and his posterity, viz., that of federal representation or covenant headship,—*i.e.*, the doctrine that God made a covenant with Adam, and that in this covenant *he* represented his posterity, the covenant being made not only for himself, but for them, including in its provisions them as well as himself; so that, while there was no *actual* participation by them in the moral culpability or blameworthiness of his sin, they became, in consequence of his failure to fulfil the covenant engagement, *rei*, or incurred *reatus*, or guilt in the sense of legal answerableness, to this effect, that God, on the ground of the covenant, regarded and treated them as if they had themselves been guilty of the sin whereby the covenant was broken; and that in this way they became involved in all the natural and penal consequences which Adam brought *upon himself* by his first sin. Now, this principle, viewing it merely as a hypothesis, and independently of the actual support it receives from Scripture, not only does not introduce any additional difficulty into the question, but does tend to throw some light upon this mysterious transaction, by bringing it somewhat under the analogy of transactions which we can comprehend and estimate, though it is not disputed that it still leaves difficulties unsolved which we cannot fully fathom.* If this were seen in its true light, and if thereby the special prejudice with which many regard this doctrine of the imputation of the guilt or *reatus* of Adam's first sin to his posterity were removed, it might be expected that all who admit the total depravity of human nature as an actual feature of men's natural condition, of which they can give no account or explanation whatever, would be more likely to yield to the weight of the positive evidence which Scripture furnishes in proof of the doctrine that all mankind sinned in Adam, and fell with him in his first transgression.

* "The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation," pp. 391, etc.—EDRS.

Sec. III.—*The Want of Original Righteousness.*

The second ingredient or constituent element of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, and in which all men now are by nature, is the want of original righteousness; and the explanation of this, too, is connected with some controversial discussions which prevailed at the time of the Reformation, and with some topics which have been since controverted between Romanists and Protestants. The statement in the Catechism, in which the want of original righteousness is represented as one of the features or elements of the estate of sinfulness into which man fell, contains, by plain implication, an assertion of these positions,—that man, before his fall, had righteousness, or justice (justitia, as it was commonly called), entire rectitude as an actual quality of his moral nature or constitution; that no man now, since the fall, has naturally this original righteousness; *and that it is a sin in men*, one of the real features of the sinfulness of the estate into which they fell, that they have it not. This original righteousness which man had before the fall, is usually taken as designating not merely innocence or freedom from everything actually sinful, and from all bias or tendency towards it, but something higher and nobler than this,—viz., the positive, entire conformity of his whole moral nature and constitution—not merely of his actions, but of the innermost sources of these actions, in his desires and motives, in all the tendencies and inclinations of his mind and heart—to all the requirements of the law, which is holy, and just, and good. Original righteousness, thus understood, Protestants have usually regarded as comprehended in the image of God, in which man was created; and they have generally considered the fact that he *was* created in God's image, as affording evidence that he was created with original righteousness.

We have not, indeed, in Scripture any very direct information as to what the image of God in which man was created consisted in; and hence some variety of opinion has been entertained upon this point. Some have held that the image of God consisted in the mental powers and capacities which constituted man a rational and responsible being; the Socinians, who usually contrive to find in the lowest deep a lower deep, view it as consisting only in dominion over the other creatures; while most men have been of opinion that it must have included, whatever else it might imply,

entire conformity of moral nature and constitution, according to his capacity, to God's character and laws. We can scarcely, indeed, conceive it possible that God would have directly and immediately created any other kind of rational and responsible being than one morally pure and perfect, according to his capacity or standing in creation; and we would have required very strong evidence to lead us to entertain any doubt of this, even though we had not been told that God created man after His own image. And we *are* plainly told in Scripture that the image of God, into which man is to be renewed,—according to which he is to be made over again, as the result in God's chosen people of the mediation of Christ, and the operation of His Spirit,—consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; from which the inference is fully warranted, that in these qualities consisted, principally at least, the image of God in which he was created.

Romanists do not dispute that Adam, before the fall, had original righteousness as an actual quality of his moral character, or that, by his sin, he lost it, not only for himself, but for his posterity,—and that all men now come into the world without it; and, indeed, a large proportion of the most eminent Romish divines maintain that this want of original righteousness—*carentia* or *privatio originalis justitiæ*—is the principal, if not the sole, ingredient of the sinfulness of men's natural condition; and that the decree of the Council of Trent leaves them at full liberty to assert this. It is Socinians only who deny that man ever had an original righteousness. As their fundamental principle upon this whole subject is, that men have now the very same moral nature or constitution as Adam had when he was created; and as they do not ascribe to men as they now come into the world what is usually understood by original righteousness as a positive quality, but merely innocence of nature, or freedom from all moral depravity, combined with full power to do whatever God requires of them, they of course deny that Adam ever possessed it. But while the Church of Rome admits that Adam, before his fall, had original righteousness as a positive quality of his moral character, she maintains that this original righteousness was not natural to him, but supernatural,—*i.e.*, that it was not comprehended in, or did not result from, the principles of his moral nature, as originally constituted, but was a supernatural gift or grace, specially or extraordinarily conferred upon him by God; and, in order to bring

out more emphatically the distinction between the *pura naturalia*, as they call them, in Adam, and this supernatural gift of original righteousness, many Popish writers have contended that this supernatural gift was not conferred upon him along with the *pura naturalia* at the time of his creation, but at a subsequent period. And it is certain that the Council of Trent intentionally and deliberately framed its decree upon the subject in such terms as not to preclude the posteriority in point of time of the bestowal of the *supernaturalia* upon Adam, for the original draft of the decree set forth that Adam by his sin lost the holiness and justice in which he was created,—*sanitatem et justitiam in qua creatus fuerat*,—and when it was represented to them that this would be a condemnation of those divines who had maintained that Adam did not possess this *justitia* or righteousness at his creation, but received it afterwards, they, in order to avoid this, changed the expression into *in qua constitutus fuerat*, as it now stands in the decree.* Although the Reformers generally, and especially Luther, had strenuously contended that this original righteousness was a quality of man's proper nature, and necessary to its perfection and completeness, and not a supernatural gift, specially and, as it were, adventitiously and in mere sovereignty conferred by God, yet nothing was formally decided upon this point by the Council of Trent. The opposite view, however, was universally held by Popish theologians; and it was at length made a binding article of faith by the bulls of Pius V. and Gregory XIII. against Baius in 1567 and 1579, confirmed by a bull of Urban VIII. in 1641.† In these bulls, which, though opposed by some at the time of their promulgation, have been accepted by the Church, and are therefore binding upon all Romanists, the following doctrines taught by Baius were condemned as heretical, and, of course, the opposite doctrines were asserted and established :—"Humanæ naturæ sublimatio, et exaltatio in consortium divinæ debita fuit integritati primæ conditionis, ac proinde naturalis dicenda est, non supernaturalis. Integritas primæ conditionis non fuit indebita naturæ humanæ exaltatio, sed ejus naturalis conditio." And, in the bull Unigenitus, the following doctrine of Quesnel was con-

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* Moehler's Symbolism, B. i., P. i., sec. i., p. 40.

† Bailly's "Theologia Moralis" Tractatus de Gratia, c. vi., tom. v., pp. 264–272.

demned:—"Gratia Adami est sequela creationis et erat debita naturæ sanæ et integræ."*

This question, accordingly, has always been regarded as one of the points controverted between Protestants and Papists. It may seem at first view a mere logomachy, and to involve considerations which are of no practical importance, or points which we have no materials for deciding. This, however, is a mistake, as might be shown at once from an examination of the nature of the case, and from the history of the discussions which have taken place regarding it. It is quite true that there are senses the words might bear in which the Protestants would admit that this original righteousness was not natural, but supernatural, and in which Papists would admit that it was not supernatural, but natural, as you will see explained in Turretine;† yet it is also true, as you will likewise see there, that there is a pretty well defined *status quaestionis* upon the subject. The question may, without entering into minute details, be said to be this: Whether this original righteousness, which Adam admittedly possessed, formed an integral necessary constituent of man's original moral constitution, so that his general position and capacities as a moral being would have been materially different from what they were if he had wanted it, and would not have possessed that completeness and perfection which are due and necessary to the place which God, in His general idea or archetype of man, intended him to occupy,—the purpose which He created man to serve; and we think there are sufficient indications in Scripture to warrant us in deciding this question against the Church of Rome in the affirmative.

The chief object of the Romanists in maintaining that this righteousness was not an original inherent quality of man's proper nature, due to it (*debita*), because necessary to its completeness or perfection, is, that they may thus lay a foundation for ascribing even to fallen man a natural power to do God's will, and that they may with greater plausibility deny that concupiscence in the regenerate is sin. The bearing of this notion upon their denial of the sinfulness of concupiscence,—the only doctrine taught by the Council of Trent, in their decree upon original sin, which Protes-

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* Perrone, Prælectiones Theologicæ; Tractatus de Deo Creatore, P. iii., c. ii., tom. i., col. 740.

† Turrettin. Loc. v., Quaest. xi. *Vide* also Bellarmin. De Gratia Primi Hominis, c. v., op. tom. iv.; and Amesii Bellarmin. Enervat., Le Blanc, and Perrone.

tants in general condemn as positively erroneous,—we will afterwards have occasion to advert to; and the mode in which they apply the notion to show that man has still, though fallen, full power to do the will of God, is this: As Adam's original righteousness, or the perfect conformity of his entire moral constitution to God's law, did not form a constituent part of his proper nature as a creature of a certain class or description, but was a superadded supernatural gift, he might lose it, or it might be taken from him, while yet he retained all his proper natural powers, including a power to do the will of God, though now without righteousness, as a positive quality of his moral character. And this, indeed, is the view which they commonly give of the nature and effects of the fall. They commonly assert that Adam, by his sin, lost all that was supernaturally bestowed upon him, but retained everything that formed an original part of his own proper moral constitution; though this likewise, they generally admit, was somewhat injured or damaged by his transgression; and this, too, they contend, is still the actual condition of fallen man. He is stained, indeed, they admit, with the guilt of Adam's sin, and he wants original righteousness, which Adam forfeited for himself and for his posterity; but there is no positive corruption or depravity attaching to his moral nature; and having the natural moral powers with which Adam was originally endowed, though without his superadded supernatural graces, he can still do something towards fulfilling the divine law, and preparing himself for again becoming the recipient of supernatural divine grace through Christ. Bellarmine, accordingly, represents the doctrine of Romanists upon this subject as striking at once against the two opposite extremes of the doctrines of the Pelagians and the Reformers; for that *by means of it* they are enabled to hold against the Pelagians, that "per Adæ peccatum totum hominem verè deteriorem esse factum," *i.e.*, by the removal of the *supernaturalia* without needing to deny the Pelagian position, that man retains, though fallen, all his *natural* powers and capacities; and at the same time to maintain against the Reformers, "nec liberum arbitrium, neque alia naturalia dona, sed solùm supernaturalia perdidisse," without needing to deny that he has lost original righteousness.*

* Bellarmin. De Gratia Primi Hominis, c. i., op. tom. iv. See this statement of Bellarmine quoted, approved of, and explained by Perrone, tom. i., col. 723.

The application which Romanists thus make of their doctrine, that original righteousness was not a natural but a supernatural quality of man's original moral constitution,—an application which in itself is quite legitimate, and cannot be evaded, *if the premises are granted*,—to defend two anti-scriptural errors,—viz., first, that fallen man retains full power to do the whole will of God; and, secondly, that concupiscence in the regenerate is not sin,—at once affords materials for establishing the falsehood of their doctrine, and illustrating the *importance* of the opposite truth as it was held by the Reformers. And it is a curious and interesting fact, and decidedly confirms these conclusions as to the falsehood of the Popish doctrine upon this point, and the practical importance of the opposite Protestant truth, that the most eminent theologians, and the best men who have at different periods risen up in the Church of Rome, and have taught so large a measure of scriptural and evangelical truth as to incur the public censure of the ecclesiastical authorities,—viz., Baius, Jansenius, and Quesnel,—have all, more or less explicitly, declared in favour of the Protestant doctrine upon this subject.*

There have been some Protestant writers who, though not deviating very far from the paths of sound doctrine on the subject of original sin in general, have adopted or approximated to the Popish views upon this point, though conveying their sentiments in different phraseology, and applying them to a different purpose. A good illustration of this is furnished by one of the most recent works of importance published in this country on the subject of original sin—the Congregational Lecture for 1845, by the late Dr Payne of Exeter. His work on the doctrine of original sin is one of very considerable ability and value, and contains some important and useful discussion, though presenting views upon some points which appear to me erroneous and dangerous. Dr Payne may be said to belong to the third of the classes under which I ranked the writers who have discussed the subject of imputation in connection with the universal prevalence of moral depravity,—consisting of those who have held to a large extent the *substance* of what has been generally taught by Calvinistic divines upon this subject, while at the same time they

* See Perrone, tom. i., col. 738–9; and De Gratia, col. 1238–9; and Le Blanc's Theses Sedanenses; De Justitia primi hominis, p. 396, where the views of Romanists on this subject are very fully explained.

exhibited a great desire to modify or soften some of the orthodox positions, and a very unnecessary and excessive fastidiousness about the employment of the ordinary orthodox phraseology. This is, I think, the general character of Dr Payne's work on original sin, though the point to which I am now to refer, along with one or two other views which he propounds, may be regarded as a somewhat more important error than would be fairly comprehended under the above description.

His leading peculiar position is, that the gifts which were conferred by God upon Adam, and deposited with him as the federal head of his posterity, including especially the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, were chartered benefits, and chartered benefits exclusively,—*i.e.*, benefits which God bestowed upon him gratuitously in mere sovereignty, to which Adam had no claim in fairness or equity, because they were not necessary to the integrity or completeness of his constitution, viewed simply as the creature man; the enjoyment of which by him, or his posterity, God might consequently suspend upon any condition He thought proper, and which He might at once take away from *them* for any reason that would warrant their being taken from *him*, just as, to use an illustration he frequently employs, a nobleman guilty of treason forfeits, by the law of our country, his titles and estates, not only for himself but his descendants. This principle he fully developes, and labours to apply, both to the implication generally of mankind in the consequences of Adam's sin, and to the introduction and prevalence of depravity of moral nature; and in this way he is led to modify some of the views which have been generally held by orthodox divines, and to censure and repudiate some of the phraseology they have been accustomed to employ; though he has not succeeded, so far as I can perceive, by any of his proposed modifications, in introducing any real or decided improvement.

For instance, upon the ground of this principle about chartered benefits, he contends that the covenant made with Adam, in which he occupied the position of federal representative of his posterity, was not a covenant of works, as Calvinistic divines have been accustomed to represent it, but a covenant of grace. That there is a sense in which it might be called a covenant of grace, no one would dispute, for it was a gracious arrangement, manifesting the goodness and benevolence of God. There is a sense in

which all God's dealings with His creatures may be classed under the two heads of gracious and penal, for no creature can in strict justice merit anything at God's hands; but under the general head of gracious, in this classification, we can and we may distinguish between those acts which are purely gratuitous,—which have no cause, or ground, or motive whatever, except the mere benevolent good pleasure of God,—and those which, though still gracious as manifesting the benevolence of God, and not due on the ground of justice irrespective of promise or compact, have yet some ground or foundation in equity, or in the fitnesses and congruities of things. We think it can be shown that God's dealings with Adam, *after He had decreed to create him*,—*i.e.*, His dealings with him in regulating his moral constitution and qualities, and in arranging as to the results of the trial to which he was subjected, upon himself and his posterity,—were gracious only in the latter of these two senses; and that, therefore, the covenant made with him may without impropriety be denied to be a covenant of grace, as it certainly was not a covenant of grace in the same sense with the new and better covenant; while, from the general nature of its fundamental provision, it may without impropriety be called a covenant of works.

But we cannot dwell upon this, for we have introduced the subject of Dr Payne's work solely for the purpose of pointing out how strikingly manifest it is, from the explanations formerly given, that this doctrine of his about chartered benefits is identical in substance with the Popish doctrine, that original righteousness is not an integral constituent quality of man's original moral constitution, and necessary to its completeness or perfection, but a superadded supernatural gift. And the resemblance might be shown to hold not only in substance, but in some curious points of detail. We have seen, for instance, that many Romish writers have held, that the supernatural gift of original righteousness was not conferred on Adam at his creation, and that the Council of Trent intentionally framed its decree in such a way as to leave this an open question; while Dr Payne, in like manner, contends that those chartered benefits, which alone Adam by his sin forfeited for himself and his posterity, were only conferred upon him when, at a period subsequent to his creation, he was invested with the character of federal head of the human race. The fact that this doctrine about chartered benefits is in substance identical with

a doctrine which has been always zealously maintained by the Church of Rome, in opposition to the great body of the Protestants, and to the soundest theologians and the best men who have sprung up from time to time in her own communion, forms a legitimate presumption against it; and Dr Payne has not, we think, produced anything sufficient to overcome the force of the presumptions and the proofs by which, as taught by the Church of Rome, it has been opposed by Protestant divines. The old Popish writers applied, as we have seen, their doctrine upon this point, chiefly to the purpose of showing that man, even in his fallen state, had full power to do the whole will of God; while Dr Payne applies his principle, in substance the same, chiefly to indicate the justice and reasonableness of the constitution, in virtue of which men are treated as if they had committed Adam's first sin, and are involved in the consequences of his transgression. As the Reformers and their Popish opponents equally admitted the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, there was no call *then* formally to defend that doctrine against the objections of those who denied it altogether; but there are two facts connected with this matter, which may be fairly regarded as confirming the substantial identity of the Popish doctrine of supernatural righteousness, and Dr Payne's doctrine of chartered benefits,—viz., first, that more modern Popish writers, who had to defend the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin against heretical Protestants who denied it, have applied their doctrine of supernatural righteousness for this purpose, very much in the same way in which Dr Payne has applied his doctrine of chartered benefits, as may be seen, for instance, in the "Prælectiones Theologicæ" of Perrone, the present Professor of Theology in the Jesuit College at Rome;* and, secondly, that Dr Payne's work contains some indications,—though this topic is not fully and formally discussed,—that he would claim for fallen men, *under the head of what is necessary in order to their being responsible*, and would ascribe to them, in fact, a larger and fuller measure of power or ability to do what God requires of them, and thereby to escape from misery, than would be consistent with the views which Calvinists in general have entertained upon this subject. This is a notion pretty plainly shadowed forth in

* De Deo creatore, P. iii., c. iv., de peccati originalis propagatione, col. 775, tom. i.

one of the features of his favourite illustration,—the case of a nobleman convicted of treason,—viz., that the actual traitor alone forfeits his life, and that his descendants, while they lose the titles and estates which, but for his act of treason, would have come to them, retain all the ordinary natural rights of citizens, and have no bar put in their way to prevent them from rising again, or *de novo, without any remission of the sentence, or any special interposition from any quarter on their behalf*, to the same position which their ancestor had occupied. Dr Payne, indeed, does not bring out any such view as this in regard to the natural condition of man,—a view which would contradict not only the doctrine of Calvinists, but the express declarations of the Council of Trent. Some of his positions, however, seem to favour it; and we are not quite sure that he was so decidedly opposed to it, as some of his general doctrines would seem to imply.

With respect to Dr Payne's application of the notion, that all that Adam in his federal or representative capacity forfeited, and forfeited for his posterity as well as himself, was only chartered benefits, to the purpose of vindicating the justice and reasonableness of the constitution whereby all men were involved in the consequences of Adam's first sin, we have only to observe that, independently altogether of the question as to the truth of this notion, its irrelevancy and insufficiency for *this* purpose are plainly implied in some positions we have already laid down,—as to the difference, in relation to this difficulty, between the doctrine which restricts the consequences of Adam's sin, in its bearing on his posterity, to temporal evils and unfavourable moral circumstances, with perhaps some slight deterioration of moral constitution, and that which extends these consequences to an entire depravity of moral nature, issuing, certainly and invariably, in actual transgressions; and the impossibility, *in this latter case*, of deriving any real assistance, in dealing with the difficulty, from God's mere right as Creator to bestow upon His creatures, according to His good pleasure, different degrees of happiness and of privilege. If Adam, as our federal head, lost for himself and us, by his sin, only chartered benefits,—gratuitously bestowed after his creation, and forming no integral part of his proper constitution as the creature man, necessary to its completeness and perfection,—then it is plain that the only aspect in which God can be contemplated as acting in the matter, is that simply of a Creator bestowing upon His

creatures different degrees of happiness and privilege; and this, as we formerly showed, is a view of His position and actings in the matter, which is utterly inadequate to throw any light upon the difficulty, unless it be assumed that men, after and notwithstanding the loss of these chartered benefits, retained all the ordinary rights and privileges of citizenship, *i.e.*, retained the power of escaping by their own strength, or by some universal grace furnished to them all, from at least permanent misery,—in other words, unless it be denied that men are now, in point of fact, in that condition of moral depravity and actual sinfulness, which Scripture, consciousness, and observation, all concur in proving to attach to them.

Here, we may remark by the way, there is brought out a confirmation of our previous position,—viz., that Dr Payne's doctrine of chartered benefits only being lost in Adam, tends to involve him (though he makes no such application of it) in the application which the Papists make of their doctrine, that original righteousness is supernatural,—viz., that men, though fallen, have still full power to do what God requires of them. There is no view of God's actings in this whole matter which at all accords with the actual, proved realities of the case, except that which represents Him in the light of a just Judge punishing sin,—a view which implies that men's want of original righteousness and the corruption of their whole nature have a penal character, are punishments righteously inflicted on account of sin, not indeed by the positive communication of depravity, but through the just withdrawal of divine grace, and of the influences of the Holy Spirit. And the only explanation which Scripture affords of this mysterious constitution of things is, that men have the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them or charged against them, so as to be legally exposed to the penalties which he incurred; and that this imputation to them of the guilt or *reatus* of his first sin is based upon his being their federal head or legal representative in the covenant which God made with him. All this, we think, is clearly enough indicated in Scripture; but beyond this Scripture does not go; —and here, therefore, our reasonings and speculations should terminate, or if they are carried at all beyond this point, they should still be strictly confined to the one single object of answering, so far as may be necessary, the objections of opponents; and lest, even in answering objections, we should be tempted to in-

dulge in unwarranted and presumptuous speculations, we should take care not to extend our reasonings beyond the limits which the logical necessities of the case require us to traverse; *i.e.*, we should restrict them to the one single object of proving—for this is all that, in the circumstances, is logically incumbent upon us—that it cannot be proved that this constitution of things necessarily involves any injustice.

Among the general suggestions that have been thrown out for the purpose of answering objections *within the limits now specified*, there is one which we have been always disposed to regard as reasonable and plausible,—as an idea which might be legitimately entertained, because, at least, not opposed to the statements of Scripture or the analogy of faith, and as fitted—though certainly not furnishing a solution of the great difficulty—to afford some relief and satisfaction to the mind in contemplating this mysterious subject. It is this: that God, in His wisdom and sovereignty,—following out, as it were, the fall of the angels who kept not their first estate,—resolved to create a rational and responsible being of a different class or description, differently constituted and differently circumstanced from the angels, and to subject this being to moral probation, having resolved to make the trial or probation of the first being of this particular class or description, as a specimen of the whole, the trial or probation of all this class of creatures descending from him; so that the result of the trial in his case should be applied to, and should determine the condition and destiny of, the race, just as if each individual of this class of beings had been actually subjected to trial or probation in his own person, with the same result as was exhibited in the first specimen of it. We think it might be shown that the application of this general idea, taken merely as a hypothesis, would furnish some materials that are fitted to stop the mouths of objectors, and to show that, while the burden of proving that this constitution necessarily involves injustice lies on them, they are not able to accomplish this. But we will not enlarge in the way of attempting to make this application of the idea, lest we should seem to be attaching to it an undue value and importance, or appear to be in any measure suspending the truth of the doctrines we have been inculcating upon *its* soundness and validity; and we hasten to observe, that the only reason why we have mentioned it, is because we think that there is a beautiful harmony between it and the

Protestant doctrine, that man's original righteousness was natural and not supernatural; that what Adam lost for himself and his posterity was not chartered benefits merely, but integral constituent elements of his moral constitution; and that these two views afford mutual corroboration.

We can scarcely conceive, in any case, of God directly and immediately creating a moral and responsible being, who did not possess inherently, as a proper integral part of his moral constitution, entire rectitude or conformity to God's law; and the difficulty of conceiving of this is increased, when the being supposed is regarded as a specimen or representative of a class of beings who are to be the subjects of a great moral experiment, while yet the experiment is to be completed or decided in the case of this one specimen as representing them all. We feel, upon such an assumption, as if there was something like a claim in equity, that this being—mutable indeed, and left to the freedom of his own will, else there could not be a full and perfect moral probation of him—should possess righteousness and holiness as qualities of his moral constitution; or, to use language formerly quoted, as employed by Baius, and condemned by the Church of Rome, that this was "*debita integritati primæ conditionis;*" and also, that he should have every advantage, in point of circumstances as well as constitution, for doing all that God required of him,—for succeeding in the probation to which he was to be subjected. It is true, indeed, that God might have superadded to his proper natural constitution supernatural gifts or graces, which would have placed Adam in equally favourable circumstances for succeeding in the trial, as those which, in point of fact, he enjoyed by nature; but then he would not, in that case, have been a being inherently of the same class or description with his posterity, and of course his trial, whatever might have been the result of it, would not have fully illustrated the *same* principles and accomplished the *same* purposes.

Sec. IV.—*Corruption of Nature.*

We can now only advert very briefly to the next great feature, or constituent element, of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell,—viz., the corruption of his whole nature, or that which is ordinarily, and most properly, called original sin. The Romanists generally contend that the sin which Adam entailed upon

his posterity consisted chiefly, if not exclusively, in the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them, and in the want of original righteousness, and say little or nothing about the corruption of his whole nature, or his moral depravity. They are not bound to deny this doctrine, for the Council of Trent has not condemned it; but neither are they bound to assert it, because the Council has abstained intentionally, as we formerly showed, from defining what are the ingredients or constituent elements of the *peccatum* which it declares that Adam transmitted to the whole human race. The Jansenists, accordingly, held themselves at liberty to maintain, with Augustine, an entire and positive corruption or depravity,—*i.e.*, actual bias or tendency to sin as attaching to man's moral nature; while Romanists more generally have denied this, or admitted it only in a very vague and indefinite sense,—very much like the less evangelical Arminians,—and have regarded original sin as being a mere negation or privation,—the want of that original righteousness, which was merely a supernatural gift bestowed upon Adam, and forfeited not only for himself, but for his posterity, by his first sin. All the Reformers maintained, and most Protestant churches have ever since professed, that it is an actual feature in the character of fallen man, that he has a powerful predominating bias, tendency, or inclination to sin,—to depart from God, and to violate His laws. This is in many respects the most important feature or element of the estate of sin into which man fell, especially as it is the proximate cause or source of all his actual transgressions of the divine commandments. He not only does not bring with him into the world anything in his moral nature that involves or produces fear or love of God,—a desire to honour or serve Him; but he is, in virtue of the actual constitution of his moral nature, *as it exists*, wholly indisposed and averse to everything that is really accordant with God's will, and with the requirements of the law which He has imposed, and could not but impose, upon His intelligent and moral creatures. This is the view given us in the sacred Scriptures of the actual moral condition of human nature, and it is abundantly confirmed by experience. Though brought out fully by the Reformers, in opposition to the Pelagian views which generally prevailed at that time in the Church of Rome, it was neither affirmed nor denied by the Council of Trent,—*i.e.*, directly, for it was

denied (as we shall afterwards see) by implication; and in the Church of Rome, as in every other church, this doctrine has ever proved a test of men's character,—those who were best acquainted with the word of God and their own hearts, and who had the deepest impressions of divine things, receiving and approving of it; and those who were deficient in these respects, and just in proportion to their deficiency, inclined to deny it altogether, or to explain it away, and practically to reduce the great and fearful reality which it asserts to insignificance or nonentity.

I am not called upon to attempt to establish the truth of this great doctrine of the corruption of man's whole nature, certainly and invariably producing actual transgressions of God's law; and I have had occasion, under the former heads, to advert fully to the relation which, in the history of the discussions of this subject, this entire corruption of nature has held, and should hold, to the other features or elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell. On these grounds I do not mean to enter further into the consideration of it, but would only express my sense of the paramount importance of becoming familiar with the evidence from Scripture, consciousness, experience, and observation, on which this great doctrine rests,—of forming clear and accurate conceptions of all that the doctrine involves or implies,—and of fully and habitually realizing it; since this is not only the most important truth, both theoretically and practically, in a full view of what man's natural condition is,—and therefore indispensable to an acquaintance with the nature and application of the remedy that has been provided,—but since, more particularly, a full establishment in the assured belief of this corruption of man's whole nature, and the universality of actual transgression resulting from it as a great reality, is most directly and powerfully fitted to preserve from error, and to guide into all truth with respect to the other elements of the sinfulness of men's natural condition, and to lead certainly and immediately to the adoption of those practical steps on which the salvation of men individually is suspended.

This subject strikingly illustrates the necessity and importance of forming and fixing in our minds precise and definite conceptions upon theological subjects, so far as the word of God affords us materials for doing so. The main part of the decree of the Council of Trent upon the subject of original sin is sound and scriptural, so far as it goes; but being, for reasons which we have

explained, very vague and general in its statements, it did nothing to advance the cause of sound doctrine. It is not, indeed, directly and in itself chargeable with Pelagianism; but as it found a Pelagian spirit and tendency generally prevalent in the Church of Rome, so it has left it there, and allowed it to operate with undiminished force, exerting a most injurious influence upon men's whole conceptions of the gospel method of salvation, and, of course, upon their spiritual welfare. And what a contrast does the decree of the Council of Trent present to the clear, precise, and definite statements of our Shorter Catechism, in regard to the nature and constituent elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell,—statements so well fitted to convey full and exact conceptions to the understanding, in regard to what man by nature really is, and thereby to impress the heart and to influence the conduct!

We have still to point out, in the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, what is not only defective, as being vague and indefinite, but positively erroneous; and to show how it is, that, by erroneous doctrines upon other subjects,—especially on baptismal justification and baptismal regeneration,—she has neutralized or rendered of none effect, practically at least, even what is sound and scriptural in her professed doctrine upon original sin.

Sec. V.—*Concupiscence.*

What is positively erroneous in the decree of the Council of Trent concerning original sin, is contained in the fifth and last section of their decree, and may be said to consist of two parts,—first, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is conferred in baptism, not only is the guilt of original sin remitted, but everything in men which comes truly and properly under the head of sin is taken away; and, secondly, that concupiscence in baptized and regenerate persons is not truly and properly sin.

The first of these positions, *with certain explanations*, is usually admitted by Protestants to be true, *except in so far as it comprehends the second.* We shall therefore advert to the second one first; and in returning to the other, and illustrating the explanations and qualifications with which alone its truth can be admitted, we will have an opportunity of explaining how the Church of Rome neutralizes or undoes all that is sound and good in its pro-

fessed doctrine upon the general subject of original sin. By concupiscence, or evil desire in its technical sense, is meant substantially what is known more popularly under the name of indwelling sin. It designates what the apostle calls the law in the members warring against the law of the mind, or the struggle between the flesh and the spirit in renewed men; but with this important limitation, that as used in this particular controversy, it includes only the first risings or movements of the desires which tend or are directed towards what is evil, antecedently to their being deliberately consented to, and to the actual sin to which they tend or point being resolved upon or performed. It is often called the fuel (fōmes) of sin, as being that from which, when it is cherished and not subdued, actual transgressions proceed. The Apostle James* undoubtedly distinguishes this concupiscence or *ἐπιθυμία*, translated "lust" in our version, from the *ἁμαρτια* or sin which it produces when it has conceived; and this proves that there is something comprehended under the name of sin which concupiscence is not. But the statement does not necessarily imply more than this, and it determines nothing as to whether or not the *ἐπιθυμία*, though of course not the same with the (sin) *ἁμαρτια* which it produces, be itself sinful. The Council of Trent denied that concupiscence in this sense, as comprehending the first risings or movements of desires tending to what is evil, but not deliberately consented to, is truly and properly sinful; and the opposite doctrine upon this subject generally maintained by Protestant churches, is thus expressed in our Confession (chap. vi., sec. 5): "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin,"—a statement which is just formally and *in terminis*, and was evidently intended to be, a contradiction to the decree of the Council of Trent, and indeed can be fully and exactly understood only when viewed in connection with that decree and the controversy to which it has given rise. It will be proper to quote the words of the decree upon this point: "Manere autem in baptizatis concupiscentiam vel fomitem, hæc sancta synodus fatetur et sentit. . . . Hanc concupiscentiam, quam aliquando Apostolus peccatum appellat, sancta

* James i. 14. 15.

synodus declarat ecclesiam catholicam nunquam intellexisse peccatum appellari, quod vere et proprie in renatis peccatum sit, sed quia ex peccato est et ad peccatum inclinat." * And then it proceeds to anathematize any one who holds a different opinion. Father Paul tells us of an interesting circumstance connected with the discussions that took place in the council regarding this part of the decree. The proposed deliverance was assented to by all except a Carmelite friar of the name of Antoine Marinier, who objected to the council condemning as heretical, under an anathema, a position which unquestionably had, *in terminis*, the sanction of the Apostle Paul, and had also, as he alleged, the authority of Augustine. His opposition, however, received no support; but, on the contrary, it only recalled to the recollection of the council two very equivocal sermons which Marinier had preached before them, in which he had spoken in a very suspicious way about the duty of confiding only in God's mercies, and not trusting in our own good works; and confirmed the suspicions which these sermons had produced, that he was not far removed from the doctrine of the Protestants.†

The doctrine of Romanists upon this subject is intimately connected with the views they hold regarding man's moral constitution before the fall. Man, they think, in his own proper nature, or *in puris naturalibus*, as the schoolmen expressed it, though free from all positive tendency to sin, was not exempted from a struggle or want of harmony between the higher and the lower departments of his nature,—a struggle or discordance which was prevented from producing or leading to anything actually sinful only by the supernatural gift of original righteousness,—a gift which, though it did not preclude a struggle, or something like it, prevented any actual sinful result, until God was pleased to permit the fall. I do not say that it was their doctrine, in regard to the constitution of man's moral nature as unfallen, that led them to deny the sinfulness of concupiscence, or of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit in the regenerate; for I believe that the reverse of this was the true history of the case, and that it was their doctrine of the non-sinfulness of concupiscence in the regenerate that led to the invention of their notion about man being created without original righteousness, except as a super-

* Sess. v. 5.

† Liv. ii., LXV.; vol. i., pp. 308-9 of Courayer.

natural quality added to the *pura naturalia*. There is but little information given us in Scripture bearing upon anything that preceded the fall of man; and both Protestants and Romanists have been much in the habit, and not unreasonably, of deducing their respective opinions as to what man was before the fall, chiefly from the views they have derived, respectively, from Scripture as to what man is as fallen, and what he is as renewed. But though the Popish view of the innocence of concupiscence in the regenerate, led to their notion of man's natural want of original righteousness, and to the consequent innocent struggle between the higher and the lower powers of his nature, rather than the reverse; yet the two doctrines manifestly harmonize with, and illustrate, each other: for it is evident, on the one hand, that if in man before his fall, viewed as *in puris naturalibus*, there was a struggle, or even a want of perfect harmony, between the higher and lower departments of his nature, this would countenance the notion that concupiscence in the regenerate, the cause of the struggle which undoubtedly exists in them, might not be sinful; and that, on the other hand, if concupiscence in the regenerate is not sin, this would countenance the notion that there might be such a struggle, or want of harmony, as is alleged, in man before the fall.

Two of the most striking and dangerous tendencies or general characteristics of the theology of the Church of Rome are,—first, exaggerating the efficacy and influence of external ordinances; and, secondly, providing for men *meriting* the favour of God and the rewards of heaven; and both these tendencies are exhibited in this single doctrine of the innocence or non-sinfulness of concupiscence. It magnifies the efficacy of baptism, which has so entirely removed from men everything which really possesses the nature of sin; and it puts men upon a most favourable vantage ground for meriting increase of grace and eternal life. Viewed in these aspects, this question, though it may appear at first sight a mere subtlety, becomes invested with no small practical importance. It will be observed that the Council of Trent, in their decree, distinctly admit that the apostle sometimes calls this concupiscence sin; and in their note upon the passage, they refer to the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, which contain those inspired declarations from which mainly Protestants have deduced the doctrine of the sinfulness of that

tendency to sin which remains in the regenerate, and of the first motions of evil desire, though not deliberately consented to or followed out. On the ground of the apostle's statements in these chapters, in which he certainly speaks of concupiscence in the regenerate as sin, the Romanists admit that there is a certain sense in which it may be called sin; but they allege that the only sense in which it can be called sin, is an improper or metaphorical one, or, as the council states it, that the apostle calls it sin, not because it is truly and properly sin, but because it proceeds from sin and inclines to sin,—or, as the Romish divines usually express it, because it is both the punishment of sin and the cause of sin. Protestants, of course, concur with them in regarding it as the punishment of sin, because the Scriptures represent the whole corruption of man's moral nature as a penal infliction imposed upon them through the withdrawal of divine grace, and of the influence of the Holy Spirit, in consequence of being involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed to them; and in regarding it also as the cause of sin, as it is manifestly the immediate antecedent or proximate cause of the actual sins, in thought, word, and deed, which the regenerate commit,—*i.e.*, of sin in the more limited sense in which the word is used by the Apostle James, when he says that lust, or evil desire, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin. But Protestants also believe that lust or concupiscence in the regenerate, as including a remaining tendency towards what is sinful, and the first or earliest motions of this tendency in the heart, though not deliberately consented to and followed out, is itself truly and properly sinful. And the main proof of this position, which the Council of Trent condemned and anathematized, is to be found in those portions of the Epistle to the Romans in which the council admits that the apostle *calls* concupiscence and its first motions sin; and in which Protestants think they can show, in addition to the mere employment of the word *ἁμαρτια*, that both the particular statements made by the apostle, and the general course and tenor of his argument, prove that he uses it in its proper sense as implying *ἀνόμια*,—*i.e.*, a want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God, and as involving guilt or *reatus* on the part of those to whom it attaches.

It would be out of place here to enter into a critical examination of the meaning or meanings of *ἁμαρτια* in these chapters, in

order to establish this position. But one thing is very manifest, that it should require evidence of no ordinary strength and clearness to warrant men in maintaining that *that* is not truly and properly sin, which the apostle so frequently calls by that name, without giving any intimation that he understood it in an improper or metaphorical sense; and that if there be any subject with respect to which men ought to be more particularly scrupulous in departing, without full warrant, from the literal ordinary meaning of scriptural statements, it is when the deviation would represent *that* as innocent which God's word calls sinful,—a tendency which men's darkened understandings and sinful hearts are but too apt to encourage.

Now, the chief proofs which the Romanists commonly adduce in support of their doctrine upon this subject, and of the alleged improper or metaphorical use of the word sin by the apostle in treating of it, are some general statements of Scripture with regard to the effects of baptism and regeneration, and with regard to the general character and position in God's sight of the regenerate; and this brings us back again to the wider and more general position which is laid down in the fifth section of the decree on original sin, and in which the more limited and specific one we have now been considering is comprehended. It is this,* that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which is conferred in baptism, the guilt of original sin is taken away, and that the whole of that which has the true and proper nature of sin is removed. The Reformers complained that the Council of Trent did them injury in ascribing to them a direct and unqualified denial of this position, in the general terms in which it is put, and declared that, with certain explanations, they admitted it to be true, except in so far as it involved or comprehended a denial of the true and proper sinfulness of that lust or concupiscence, that remaining corruption of moral nature, which still attached to the regenerate.

It is important to observe that Calvin and other Protestants, in discussing this position as laid down by the Council of Trent, do not usually enlarge upon the identification here made of baptism and regeneration, or raise any controversy about this,

* Si quis per Jesu Christi Domini nostri gratiam, quæ in baptismate confertur, reatum originalis peccati remitti negat, aut etiam asserit, non tolli totum id, quod veram et propriam peccati rationem habet, sed illud dicit tantum radi aut non imputari; anathema sit.

but just assume that baptism is regeneration, or rather that baptism may be here taken in the same sense as regeneration, as descriptive of that important era in a man's history, when God pardons his sins and admits him into the enjoyment of His favour. The Church of Rome holds that all this takes place invariably at and in baptism, believing in the doctrines both of baptismal justification and baptismal regeneration. Luther held some obscure notion of a similar kind, so far as regeneration is concerned; for he never thoroughly succeeded in throwing off the taint of Popish corruptions upon some points connected with the sacraments. The other Reformers certainly did not admit the Popish doctrines of baptismal justification and regeneration; but when the question as to the connection between baptism and regeneration was not under discussion at the time, they sometimes speak of baptism as if it were virtually identical with regeneration, just because the one is, in its general object and import, a sign or seal of the other,—because the baptism of an adult (and of course it is chiefly from adult baptism that we ought to form our general impressions as to what baptism is, and means), when the profession made in it is honest, or corresponds with the reality of the case, is a profession or declaration of his having been regenerated or born again, and having been admitted to the possession of all the benefits or privileges which are connected with regeneration. The Scriptures, in their more direct and formal statements about baptism, have respect chiefly, if not exclusively, to adult baptism, and assume the honesty or accuracy of the profession made in it; and the application of this consideration points out the futility of the arguments commonly adduced in support of baptismal regeneration, as usually taught by Papists and Prelatists. Upon the same ground, it is no uncommon thing for theologians, when they are not discussing the distinct and specific question of the connection that subsists generally or universally between baptism and regeneration, to use these words as virtually describing one and the same thing.

This is the true explanation of the fact, which appears at first sight to be startling, that Calvin and other theologians, in discussing this position of the Council of Trent, do not usually raise any difficulty as to what is here said about baptism, but virtually regulate their admissions and denials regarding it, and the grounds on which they support them, just as if what is here said of

baptism were said of regeneration, or the occasion when that grace of God is actually bestowed through which men's state and character are changed, and they escape from the consequence of being involved in the guilt of Adam's first sin. Calvin, accordingly, in discussing this part of the decree of the council in his Antidote, disclaiming the doctrine which it imputes to Protestants, and explaining how far they agreed and how far they differed with it, embodies his views in the following statement:—"Nos totum peccati reatum vere tolli in Baptismo, asserimus: ita ut quæ manent peccati reliquiæ, non imputentur. Quo res clarius pateat, in memoriam revocent lectores, duplicem esse Baptismi gratiam: nam et peccatorum remissio illic, et regeneratio nobis offertur. Remissionem plenam fieri docemus: regenerationem inchoari duntaxat, suosque totâ vitâ facere progressus. Proinde manet vere peccatum in nobis, neque per Baptismum statim uno die extinguitur: sed quia deletur reatus, imputatione nullum est."*

It is held, then, by Protestants, that in baptism,—*i.e.*, according to the explanation above given, at that great era when men receive the grace of God in truth, be it when it may, for *that* is not the question *here*,—their whole guilt, or *reatus*, or liability to punishment—the guilt of Adam's first sin, in which they were involved, and the guilt of all their own past sins—is taken away, and that the reigning power or corruption in their natures is subdued, so that sin, in the sense of depravity, has no longer *dominion* over them. But, on the other hand, they contend, in opposition to the Church of Rome, that even after men have been baptized, justified, and regenerated, the corruption or depravity of their nature is not wholly taken away; and there still attaches to them as long as they live much that is truly and properly sinful, much that might, viewed with reference to its own intrinsic demerits, justly expose them to God's displeasure, though it is not now imputed to them for guilt and condemnation.

The grounds on which the Council of Trent, professing to interpret Scripture infallibly, maintains in opposition to this, that in baptism or regeneration everything which is truly and properly sinful is removed or taken away, as they are embodied in the decree itself, are these,—that God hates nothing in the regenerate; that there is no condemnation to those who are truly buried with

* Calvin. Tractatus, p. 234. Amstel. 1667.

Christ by baptism unto death, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; that they have put off the old man, and have put on the new man, who is created after the image of God; and that they are called pure, holy, righteous, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. It is manifest, however, that none of these statements of Scripture about the general character and position of the regenerate, bear precisely and immediately upon the point in dispute; and that just *from their generality* they do not necessarily preclude the possibility of its being true, if other portions of Scripture seem to warrant the belief, that there is still something even about these men so described, which is in its own nature sinful, and might justly expose them to God's displeasure. That there is not now anything charged against them as involving guilt, *reatus*, or as *de facto* exposing them to condemnation and danger; that, as denominated from what now forms their guiding principle and determines their general character, they are no longer ungodly and depraved, but holy and righteous; that they are the objects of God's special love and complacency, and will assuredly be admitted by Him at last to the enjoyment of His own presence,—*all* this is certain, for it is clearly and explicitly taught in Scripture. But Scripture just as clearly and explicitly teaches, that even those persons, of whom all this is predicated, have still, so long as they remain upon earth, something sinful about them; that they are not only sinning in fact, by actual transgressions of God's law and by shortcomings in the discharge of duty, but also that the corruption or depravity of their nature has not been wholly taken away, but still manifests its presence and operation; and that, in estimating what there is about them that is truly sinful, we must take in this remaining corruption, and all its motions, as well as their actual transgressions of God's commandments. If this be indeed taught in Scripture, then we are bound to receive and admit it; and even if there were far greater difficulty than there is in reconciling it with other statements made there with regard to the character and position of these men, this would afford no sufficient reason for our refusing to admit it as a portion of what God in His word teaches us concerning them, and of what therefore it is incumbent upon us to believe.*

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* *Vide* Calvin's Antidote; Heidegger's Anatome; Davenant; Downame on Justification.

While, then, the Church of Rome holds the great scriptural principle, that Adam, by his fall, forfeited the favour of God, and holiness of nature not only for himself but for his posterity, and transmitted sin and death to the whole human race, she has not only erred by defect, in wrapping up this great truth in vague and general terms, and giving no clear and definite explanation of the nature and constituent elements of the sinfulness of the condition into which man fell; but she has also incurred the guilt of teaching one decided and important error,—in asserting that, in baptism or regeneration, everything that is properly sinful is removed or taken away; and that concupiscence in the regenerate is not sin, though repeatedly called so by an inspired apostle. We would now only observe (for it is scarcely worth while to notice the declaration of the council in the end of their decree about original sin, that it was not their intention to comprehend in it the Blessed and Immaculate Virgin Mary, the mother of God), that the Church of Rome has further provided, by other doctrines which she inculcates, for neutralizing practically all the scriptural truth which she teaches concerning the fall of man and its consequences. By teaching the invariable connection between the due administration of the ordinance of baptism, and the entire removal of guilt and depravity of nature, she has practically removed from men's minds, at least in countries where a profession of Christianity is established,—and where, in consequence, most persons are baptized in infancy,—all sense and impression of their true condition, responsibility, and danger as fallen creatures, who have become subject to the curse of a broken law. It is true, indeed, that men all come into the world involved in sin; but then, in professedly Christian countries, they are almost all baptized in infancy; and this, according to the Church of Rome, certainly frees them at once, and as a matter of course, from all guilt and depravity. No baptized person, according to the Popish doctrine, has any further process of regeneration to undergo, any renovation to be effected upon his moral nature. All that was necessary in this respect has been accomplished in his baptism, wherein, as the semi-Popish Catechism of the Church of England hath it, "he was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Men may still, indeed, incur guilt by actual transgressions of God's law, but the Church of Rome has provided for their comfort the sacrament of penance, another

external ordinance by which this guilt is taken away; and it is comforting also to be assured, that, in their endeavours to preserve what is called their baptismal purity from the stain of actual transgressions, they have no corruption or depravity of nature to struggle with. The practical effect of this teaching is to lead men to make no account whatever of their being involved in original sin, as including both guilt and depravity, so far as concerns any state of mind which they are at any time called upon to cherish, or any duty which they can be called upon to discharge; for what difference will it make practically upon the views, feelings, and impressions of the great mass of mankind, whether they are told that they have no original sin, or that, though they have, it was all certainly and conclusively washed away when they were baptized in their infancy? The practical effect upon the minds of Papists must be substantially the same as if they had been educated in Pelagian or Socinian principles, or in the entire disbelief of original sin; *i.e.*, they will have the impression, even if they should be led to turn their thoughts to religious subjects when they come to years of understanding, and before they have been led into the commission of grosser sins, that they have just to start upon the work of effecting all that is now needful for their own salvation, by preserving a decent conformity to outward requirements, whether ordinances or moral duties, while they have no depravity of nature, which must first of all have its power broken,—still be continually struggled against. Scriptural views of the effects of the fall, and of the actual condition of man as fallen, firmly held and fully applied, are fitted to exert a most wholesome influence upon men's whole conceptions of the way of salvation, and their whole impressions of divine things, and, indeed, are indispensable as a means to this end; but the Church of Rome holds the truth upon this important subject, so far as she holds it, in unrighteousness, admitting it in words, but denying it in reality,—admitting it into her system only for the purpose of making men dependent for its removal upon the priest, by the administration of an outward rite, that they may thus be constrained into submission to his authority, but for any other practical purposes rejecting or denying it. It is a striking illustration of the injurious and dangerous tendency of the notion that guilt and depravity are taken away in baptism, that in Romish theology,—and this is true, from the same cause, to a large extent, of the theology of the

Church of England,—the important scriptural doctrine of regeneration, or of a real renovation of men's moral nature by the operation of the Holy Ghost, through the belief of the truth, is seldom if ever mentioned, but is quietly assumed to be wholly unnecessary; because men have been baptized in their infancy, and have thereby been certainly put in possession of everything that is necessary, except their own outward obedience to God's commandments, for their deliverance from all danger, and their admission into heaven.

Sec. VI.—*Sinfulness of Works before Regeneration.*

I have had occasion to mention that, at the time of the Reformation, the disputes between the Reformers and the Romanists under the head of original sin, turned, not so much upon the proper nature or definition of the thing itself, or the exposition of its constituent elements, but rather upon its practical bearing on the subjects of free-will, grace, and merit,—topics with which it certainly has, upon any view, a very intimate connection. Luther and his immediate followers were chiefly concerned about bringing out fully the true doctrine of Scripture as to the way in which a sinner is saved from guilt, depravity, and ruin, and clearing this doctrine from the corruptions with which it had been obscured and perverted in the teaching that prevailed generally in the Church of Rome. The great obstacles they had to encounter in this work, were to be found in the notions that generally obtained with respect to human ability and human merit. The substance of what was then commonly believed upon these points, speaking generally, and not entering at present into anything like detail, was this: First, that men, notwithstanding their fallen condition, have still remaining some natural power by which they can prepare and dispose themselves for receiving divine grace, and even, in a certain sense, do something to merit that grace of God, by which alone their deliverance can be effected; and, secondly, that after the grace of God has been bestowed upon them, and has produced its primary and fundamental effects, they are then in a condition in which they have it in their power to merit from God, in a higher and stricter sense, increase of grace and eternal life. These notions had been inculcated by many of the schoolmen, and prevailed generally, almost universally, in the Church of

Rome at the period of the Reformation. It is certain that they were almost universally entertained by the instructors of the people at the time when Luther began his public labours as a Reformer; and it is manifest that they must have very materially influenced men's whole conceptions as to what man by nature is, as to what he can do for his own deliverance, and as to the way in which that deliverance is actually effected.

Now, the great work for which God raised up Luther, and which He qualified and enabled him to accomplish, was just to overturn these notions of human ability and human merit, with the foundation on which they rested, and the whole superstructure that was based upon them. These notions implied, or were deduced from, certain views as to the actual condition of human nature, as possessed by men when they come into the world; while the great practical result of them was to divide the accomplishment of men's salvation between the grace of God and the efforts and achievements of men themselves. It was chiefly in this way that the subject of original sin came to occupy a place in the controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome; while these considerations, combined with the fact formerly adverted to, —viz., that the Church of Rome was so tied up by the authority of Augustine, and by the decisions of the early church in the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies of the fifth and sixth centuries, that she could not, without belying all her principles, deviate very far from scriptural views upon original sin, at least in formal profession,—also explain the result already referred to, viz., that the discussions which then took place connected with original sin, turned mainly upon the bearing of the actual, existing moral condition of man as he comes into the world, upon free-will, grace, and merit. The Reformers, instead of labouring to prove that all Adam's posterity were involved in the guilt and penal consequences of his first transgression, and that he transmitted sin and death to all his descendants,—positions which, in some sense, and as expressed thus generally, the Romanists usually did not dispute,—were mainly concerned about certain practical conclusions which they thought deducible from them, and which, when once established, virtually overturned the whole foundations of the views that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome, as to the way of a sinner's salvation. These practical conclusions were mainly two,—viz., first, that men, until they have become

the subjects of God's special grace through Christ in regeneration, are altogether sinful, or have nothing whatever in them or about them but what is sinful; and, secondly, that even after they have become the subjects of God's justifying and renewing grace, there is still something sinful, and in itself deserving of punishment, about all that they are and all that they do, about every feature of their character, and every department of their conduct. These are strong and sweeping positions. It is evidently a matter of great importance to ascertain whether they are true or not;—for, if true, they are manifestly fitted to exert a most important influence, both theoretically and practically,—*i.e.*, both in regulating men's conceptions of the way in which a sinner's salvation is and must be effected, and in regulating the personal feelings and impressions of those whose minds are at all concerned about their spiritual welfare. On this account it may be proper to devote some observations to the explanation and illustration of these most important positions, which were maintained by all the Reformers, and have been generally adopted by the Protestant churches. Luther, indeed, in explaining and defending them, made use occasionally of some rash and exaggerated expressions, which afforded a plausible handle for cavilling to Popish controversialists. But the positions, in substance, as we have stated them, were generally adopted by the Reformers, and had a place assigned to them in most of the Reformed Confessions. The Council of Trent condemned them both, well knowing that the maintenance of them proved an insuperable obstacle to any very material corruption of the gospel of the grace of God, and that, when intelligently and cordially received, they had a most powerful tendency to preserve men in a state of thought and feeling, in regard to the way of a sinner's salvation, very different from that which the Church of Rome inculcated and encouraged.

The first position is, that until men individually become the subjects of God's special grace,—*i.e.*, until God's grace is actually communicated to them in their justification and regeneration,—there is nothing in them or about them but what is sinful, and deserving of God's displeasure. Now, this is virtually the same thing as saying that man's actual moral nature as he comes into the world is wholly and not partially depraved; that he does not possess any tendency or inclination to what is truly good, but only to what is evil or sinful; that out of the mere exercise of his

natural powers, the mere operation of the natural principles of his moral constitution, viewed apart from the special grace conferred upon him, nothing really good does or can come, nothing that either is in itself, or is fitted to produce, what is really in accordance with the requirements of God's law,—or, what is in substance the same thing, that all the actions of unregenerate men are wholly sinful. The Church of Rome admits* that a man cannot be justified before God by his own works, done by the powers of nature, and without the grace of Christ, and that he cannot, without the preventing (prævenians) inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, believe, hope, love, and repent as is necessary in order that the grace of justification may be conferred upon him; but then the Council of Trent, while maintaining these doctrines, denounced an anathema against those who held† "that all works which are done before justification" (justification, it must be remembered, comprehends, in Romish theology, regeneration, and indeed the whole of what is usually classed by Protestant divines under the general head of the application of the blessings of redemption), "in whatever way they may be done, are truly sins, and deserve the displeasure of God, and that the more anxiously any man strives to dispose or prepare himself for grace, he only sins the more grievously."

This canon affords a good illustration of an observation formerly made in the general review of the proceedings of the council. The whole substance of the Protestant doctrine which the council intended to anathematize, is set forth in the first part of the canon; and the latter part of what is included in the same anathema, about a man only sinning the more grievously the more he strives to prepare himself for grace, is merely a somewhat strong and incautious statement of Luther's,—containing, indeed, what is true in substance, but forming no part of the main doctrine, and needing, perhaps, to be somewhat explained and modified. Luther, of course, in making this statement, was describing the case of a man who was laboriously going about to establish his

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* Can. Trid., Session vi., can. i. and iii.

† Canon vii. Si quis dixerit, opera omnia, quæ ante justificationem fiunt, quâcunque ratione facta, sint, vere esse peccata, vel odium Dei mereri, aut, quanto vehementius quis nititur se disponere ad gratiam, tanto eum gravius peccare; anathema sit.

own righteousness, who, having been somewhat impressed with the importance of salvation, was anxiously seeking to procure God's favour and the grace of justification by deeds of law; and the substance of what he meant to teach upon this subject—though he may have sometimes expressed it strongly and incautiously—was this, that a man who was acting out so thoroughly erroneous views of the way of a sinner's salvation, was even, by the very success which might attend his efforts, only exposing his eternal welfare to the more imminent danger, inasmuch as any success he might have in this process had a powerful tendency to lead him *to stop short* of what was indispensable to his salvation,—a statement which is fully warranted both by Scripture and experience. But as the statement, when nakedly put without explanation, had a paradoxical and somewhat repulsive aspect, the council did not think it beneath them to introduce it into their anathema, in order to excite a prejudice against the main doctrine which they intended to condemn. This doctrine itself,—viz., that all works done before justification, or by unregenerate men, are truly sins, and deserve God's displeasure,—with the practical conclusion which is involved in it,—viz., that nothing done by men before they are justified and regenerated by God's grace, can possibly merit or deserve in any sense, however limited, the favour of God, or even exert any favourable influence in the way, either of calling forth any gracious exercise of God's power, or of preparing men for the reception of it,—was maintained by all the Reformers, and was established by them on satisfactory scriptural evidence. Calvin has a chapter* to prove, and he does prove, that "ex corrupta hominis natura nihil nisi damnabile prodire," —meaning by *damnabile*, what deserves condemnation,—and, of course, intending to teach, that so far from there being anything about men, resulting merely from their natural principles, and antecedently to their regeneration by the gracious power of God, which can merit justification, or even prepare them for the reception of it, there is, on the contrary, nothing about them, and nothing that they either do or can do, but what is of such a character and tendency as to afford sufficient ground for subjecting them to the sentence which the law of God denounces against transgression. The same doctrine is taught explicitly in the

* Instit., Lib. ii., c. iii.

thirteenth article of the Church of England:—Art. XIII. Of Works before Justification: "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin." The same doctrine is thus set forth, in connection with the principal grounds on which it rests, with admirable fulness, propriety, and precision in our own Confession:*—"Works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others" (such, for instance, as giving money for the relief of the poor or the spread of the gospel); "yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the word; nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful, and displeasing unto God."

Protestants have always maintained that their doctrine upon this subject is clearly contained in, and necessarily deducible from, the general representations which Scripture gives us of the moral character and condition of men as they come into the world, and is established also by scriptural declarations bearing very directly and explicitly upon the point in dispute. The Papists, in order to maintain their position that all works done before justification are not sins, are obliged to assert that the corruption or depravity of human nature is not total, but only partial, and that man did not wholly, but only in part, lose the image of God by the fall. Everything in Scripture which proves the complete or total corruption of man's moral nature,—which shows that he is, as our Confession says,† "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil,"—equally proves, that until God's gracious power is put forth to renew him, all his actions are only and wholly sinful. If the corruption is total and complete, as the Scripture represents it, then there is nothing in man, until he be quickened and renewed, which either

* West. Con., C. xvi., sec. vii. † C. vi., sec. iv.

is good, or can of itself produce or elicit anything good. Our Saviour has said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and in saying so He has laid down a great principle, which, viewed in connection with what can be shown to be the ordinary meaning of "the flesh" in Scripture, just amounts in substance to this, that corrupt human nature, as it is and by itself, can produce nothing but what is corrupt; and He asserted the same general principle with equal clearness, though in figurative language, when He said, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

The statement of the apostle* is very strong and explicit: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." There can be no reasonable doubt about the meaning of the word "flesh,"—no reasonable doubt that it means not only the body with its appetites, but *the whole man*, with all his faculties and tendencies, in his natural or unrenewed condition; and if so, the apostle here explicitly asserts of himself, and, in himself, of every other partaker of human nature, that antecedently to, and apart from, the regenerating grace of God changing his nature, there was no good thing in him, and that, of course, there could no good thing come out of him. The same doctrine is also explicitly taught by the same apostle when he says,† "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." And again:‡ "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he knew them, because they are spiritually discerned." These statements are plainly intended to describe the natural state or condition of men, antecedently to the operations of divine grace upon their understandings and hearts, with respect to their power or capacity of knowing, loving, obeying, and pleasing God, and actually doing so; in short, with respect to their doing anything good, or discharging any duty which He requires, or effecting anything that may really avail for their deliverance and salvation; and the description plainly and explicitly given of men's condition is this, that men are actually destitute of any such power or capacity,—that they do, and can do, nothing to realize these results.

Men are very apt, when they read such statements in the

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* Rom. vii. 18. † Rom. viii. 7, 8. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

word of God, to act upon some vague impression that they are not to be taken literally, but that they must be understood with some qualifications,—that they should in some way or other be explained away. But a vague impression of this sort is wholly unreasonable. When the words are once proved or admitted to be a part of God's recorded testimony, our only business is to ascertain what is really their meaning. If any limitation is to be put upon the natural proper meaning of the words, the grounds and reasons of the proposed limitation must be distinctly specified and defined, and must be clearly apprehended by the understanding. And the only source from which a valid or legitimate limitation of their import can be derived is the word of God itself; *i.e.*, materials must be produced from the context, or from other portions of the sacred Scriptures, to prove that they are not to be taken in all the latitude of their natural proper meaning, and to mark out to what extent the limitation is to be carried. God says that in us, that is, in our flesh or natural character,—in the whole of man in his unrenewed state,—there dwelleth no good thing. If this statement is not to be taken in its proper literal meaning; in other words, if it is to be maintained,—and this is virtually the position taken by the Romanists, and all others who either deny or in any measure explain away the total and complete depravity of human nature,—that in our flesh or natural character there *does* dwell some good thing, then it is plainly incumbent upon those who take this ground, to produce explicit and satisfactory proof from Scripture that there is some good thing in fallen and unrenewed men; and that, of course, this being established, the apostle's statement is to be taken with some limitation; or else they justly expose themselves to the woe denounced against men who call evil good.

Romanists, and others who adopt similar views upon this subject, usually content themselves with the general statement, that the corruption or depravity of human nature is not total, but only partial; endeavouring to defend this general position by bringing out what they allege it is necessary for men to have, in order to their being responsible, without in general attempting to define how far the corruption goes and where it stops, or to mark out what there is of good that still characterizes fallen and unrenewed men. They do not usually dispute absolutely, or as a general position, that man by his fall forfeited and lost the image of God;

but they commonly assert that some traces or features of this image still remained,—a position which Protestants in a certain sense admit; and some of them, as Bellarmine,* have attempted to give plausibility and definiteness to this notion, or rather have retracted or explained away the concession that man has lost the image of God, by inventing a distinction, which has no foundation in Scripture, between the *image* of God and the *likeness* of God; and asserting that man has lost the latter, the likeness, but not the former, the image. Moehler admits that this position is fairly involved in the doctrine of the Council of Trent,—viz., that "fallen man still bears the image of God;" and he professes† to give great credit to Calvin for teaching a more rational and Catholic doctrine with respect to the natural condition of man than Luther, by admitting that the image of God in man was not wholly obliterated. He represents Luther as the more erroneous and extravagant, but, at the same time, the more consistent in his views upon this subject, and describes Calvin as only involving himself in confusion and inconsistency by the partially sounder views which he entertained in regard to the remains of the divine image in fallen men. In order to lay a plausible ground for these allegations, Moehler perverts the views both of Luther and Calvin, and their respective followers, upon this subject, bending them in opposite directions, and thus increasing the apparent discrepancy between them. He represents Luther as denying the existence in fallen man of any religious or moral capacities or faculties, as if he had become literally like a stock or a stone, or an irrational animal,—an imputation which has no fair and solid foundation, though it may have some apparent countenance in one or two rash and incautious expressions; and he represents Calvin as admitting the existence of remains of the divine image in fallen man in such a sense as to be inconsistent with his total depravity.

But the truth is, that Calvin manifested no inconsistency either with Luther, or with himself, in treating of this subject. Calvin did not admit that traces and remains of the divine image were to be found in fallen man in any sense which, either in his own apprehension or *in the nature and truth of the case*, was in the least inconsistent with maintaining the *entire* depravity of human

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* Moehler's Symbolism, vol. i., p. 65. † Moehler, vol. i., pp. 103–109.

nature, or the absence of all that was really good in unrenewed men, and the utter sinfulness of all their actions. The only difference between Luther and Calvin upon this subject lies in what we have repeatedly had occasion to advert to,—viz., that Luther not unfrequently indulged in strong and paradoxical language, without paying due regard to the exact import of his expressions; while Calvin's wonderful perspicacity, and soundness, and comprehensiveness of judgment, communicated in general to his statements an exactness and precision to which Luther never attained. The remains of the divine image which Calvin admitted were still to be found in fallen man, consisted not in any actual remaining tendency to what was truly good, nor in the possible realization by his own strength, and through the mere operation of his natural principles, of any knowledge, righteousness, or holiness, which was really in accordance with what God required of him; but chiefly in the general structure of his mental faculties,—in those natural capacities of acquiring a knowledge of truth and God, and loving and serving Him, which constitute Him, in contradistinction to the lower animals, a rational, and in a certain sense, a religious being, and make him a proper subject, a suitable recipient, of those gracious operations of the divine Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth, by which he may be renewed, or made over again, after God's image. In this sense Calvin admitted, and so have Protestant divines in general, that fallen man retains features of the divine image—which plainly enough indicate the high place originally assigned to him in the creation,—in his relation to God, his intrinsic fitness or subjective capacity, in virtue of his mental and moral constitution, for acting suitably to that relation, and of course the possibility of his being again enabled to do so, without an entire reconstruction of the general framework of his mental constitution and faculties, though not without most important changes which God's gracious power alone can effect. In this sense, but in no other, man may be said to retain the traces or remains of the image of God; but there is nothing in all this in the least inconsistent with what Calvin and Protestants in general have regarded as clearly taught in Scripture with respect to the total depravity of human nature,—man's natural want of any actual available capacity in himself for what is truly good,—and the consequent sinfulness of all his actions, of all the actual outgoings of his natural principles, until he is re-

newed by God's grace in the spirit of his mind. That this was Calvin's mind upon the subject, is perfectly plain from repeated and explicit statements,—nay, even from those quoted by Moehler himself, in support of the account he gives of Calvin's doctrine: "Quin Adam, ubi excidit e gradu suo, hâc defectione a Deo alienatus sit, minime dubium est. Quare etsi demus non prorsus exinanitam ac deletam in eo fuisse Dei imaginem, sic tamen corrupta fuit, ut quicquid superest, horrenda sit deformitas. . . . . Ergo quum Dei imago sit integra naturæ humanæ præstantia, quæ refulsit in Adam ante defectionem, postea sic vitiata et prope deleta, ut nihil ex ruinâ nisi confusum, mutilum, labeque infectum supersit." *

Romanists are fond of dwelling, in support of their doctrine upon this subject, upon the religious sense manifested by all nations, in all varieties of outward circumstances, as indicated by their religious rites and ceremonies; and upon the examples of virtue or virtuous actions given by some of the celebrated men of heathen antiquity. But it can derive no efficient support from these quarters; for the question really comes to this, Can it be proved, and can it be proved by evidence sufficient to warrant us in contradicting or modifying the explicit declarations of Scripture assuring us, that in men's natural or unrenewed character there dwelleth no good thing, that there is anything really good in the actions here referred to, whether of a moral or of a religious kind? And in order to settle this question, we must take the scriptural standard of what is *good*, and apply it to them, remembering at the same time that the *onus probandi* lies upon those who affirm their goodness, since it cannot be reasonably disputed that the word of God seems plainly *prima facie* to *deny* it, in those general statements which have been quoted or referred to. When the question is considered in this light, and discussed on these conditions, there is no difficulty in showing that Romanists are unable to establish the doctrine upon this subject to which the Council of Trent has committed them. If good works, in accordance with the scriptural standard, be, in conformity with what is implied in the statement formerly quoted from our Confession, those only which proceed from a heart purified by faith, which are done in a right manner, according to the word, and to a

* Calvin. Lib. i., c. xv., sec. 4. Moehler, vol. i., p. 104.

right end—the glory of God, then it is manifestly impossible to prove that any actions, whether of a moral or a religious kind, that were truly good, have ever been performed by any but men of whom there was every competent reason to believe that they had been born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth.

The doctrine, then, taught by the Reformers, and anathematized by the Council of Trent,—that works done before justification, and of course all the actions of unregenerate men, are truly sins, and deserve the displeasure and condemnation of God,—is clearly taught in the sacred Scriptures, and ought to be laid down as a fixed principle in all our investigations into the way and manner in which men are delivered from their natural condition of guilt and depravity, affording as it does a sufficient proof that there can be no such thing as what Popish theologians usually call merit of congruity, or *meritum de congruo*,—*i.e.*, a superior measure of antecedent moral worth and excellence, rendering some men more congruous or suitable recipients of divine grace than others; and that the origin of all that is truly good in men, and really bears with a favourable influence upon their salvation, must be traced to the special grace or favour of God in Christ, and to the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit.

Dr Chalmers has discussed very fully, upon a variety of occasions, the right mode of stating and enforcing,—especially with a view to the conviction of irreligious men,—the true moral character and condition of those who have not yet received the grace of God; and has brought forward upon this subject some views of great practical value and importance. He has more particularly laboured to show the propriety and desirableness, with a view to producing a practical impression on the understandings and consciences of irreligious men, of fully admitting the important differences that may be observed in them in regard to integrity, benevolence, generosity, and similar qualities, and in regard to the discharge of social and domestic duties; and urged strenuously the importance of chiefly enforcing upon them, with a view to their conviction, the *ungodliness* with which they are all, and all equally, chargeable; while he has presented some very striking portraits of the extent to which qualities and conduct,—amiable and useful, well fitted to call forth respect and esteem,—may exist without anything resulting from a right sense of men's relation to

God, and of the duty they owe to Him. In his very important and interesting exposition of these topics, he was not called upon to advert to those views of the subject which I have had occasion to explain; and he has, in consequence, been led to make some statements which might seem at first sight scarcely reconcileable with the position I have endeavoured to illustrate. There is, however, no real discrepancy,—any apparent discrepancy arising solely from the different aspects in which the subject has been contemplated, and the different purposes to which it has been applied. I entirely concur in all the positions Dr Chalmers has laid down upon the subject, though I do not approve of all his phraseology, and especially doubt the propriety of calling anything in the character of unrenewed men *good*, absolutely or without explanation, when the apostle has so expressly asserted that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing; or of applying this epithet, or any synonymous one, to any actions which do not correspond with the description of good works that has been quoted from our Confession of Faith.

Sec. VII.—*Sinfulness of Works after Regeneration.*

The second practical conclusion which the Reformers deduced from the doctrine of original sin, was,—that even after men have been justified and regenerated, there is still something sinful about all of them so long as they continue upon earth, staining their whole character and actions with what is in its own nature displeasing to God and deserving of punishment, and is therefore necessarily exclusive of merit and supererogation; and this position we propose now briefly to illustrate.

It is of course not denied that there is something,—nay, much,—that is really good, or really accordant with the requirements of God's law, in men who have been born again. Their hearts have been purified by faith; their actions are, to a considerable extent, really regulated by the right standard,—the word of God,—and directed to a right end,—the promotion of His glory. They are dwelt in by the Spirit of God, who works in them; and the results of His operation,—*so far as they are His*,—must be good. They have been created again in Christ Jesus unto good works, and they walk in them. All this is true; but it is also true, that even they are daily breaking God's commandments in thought, word,

and deed; and that their actions, even the best of them, are stained with imperfection and sin. Luther, on this point, as well as on that formerly discussed, had made some rash and incautious statements, and it has ever since been the general practice of Popish writers to misrepresent Protestants by charging them with maintaining that there are no good works performed even by regenerate men, but that all their actions are mortal sins. This is an inaccurate and unfair representation of the Protestant doctrine, although some of Luther's statements may have given it some apparent countenance. Protestants do not dispute that renewed men, out of the good treasure of their hearts, bring forth good things; that they perform actions which are called good in the word of God, and of course are good, even when tried by the scriptural standard. What they contend for is, that even renewed men have also something about them that is evil; and that all their actions, even the best of them, though good in the main, have got about them something sinful and defective, and come so far short of what the law of God requires, that, when viewed simply in themselves, and tried by that high and holy standard, they must be pronounced to be sinful, and, so far as intrinsic merit is concerned, to deserve, *not* reward, but punishment.*

The Council of Trent† anathematizes "any who say that a righteous man, in every good work, sins at least venially, or, what is more intolerable, mortally, and therefore deserves eternal punishment; and that he is not condemned only because God does not impute these works to his condemnation." Now, Protestants do not admit, but, on the contrary, utterly deny, the Popish distinction between mortal and venial sins, so far as concerns their proper nature and intrinsic demerit; and it is, of course, unwarrantable and unfair to ascribe to them, directly or by implication, the use or employment of such a distinction. They believe that every sin,—*i.e.*, any want of conformity unto, or transgression of,

* This point is exceedingly well stated, and the real meaning of Luther and the Reformers regarding it is very clearly and accurately explained, in the following extract from Bishop Davenant's Prælectiones de Justitia Habituali et Actuali: "Nunc illud unum addemus, Lutherum aliosque nostris, qui dixerint renatos in quovis opere bono peccare mortaliter; nihil aliud voluisse, quàm illos in optimis suis operibus non implere perfectionem legis, sed admiscere aliquem defectum, qui habet rationem peccati, et per consequens, induceret reatum mortis apud districtum judicem, si persona operans a beneficio Mediatoris et misericordiæ excluderetur."—Cantab. 1631, p. 435.

† Sess. vi., can. xxv.

the law of God,—is in its own nature mortal, and deserving of God's wrath and curse; and might, when viewed by itself, and apart from God's revealed purposes and arrangements, and His previous actual dealings and engagements with men, be, without any injustice, made the ground of a sentence of condemnation. If, then, any of them should assert that the sin which they ascribe to all the good works, even of righteous or regenerate men, is not venial but mortal sin, they must mean by this nothing more than that it is truly sin, and not a mere defect or infirmity which need not be much regarded, as it does not imply a real transgression of, or want of conformity to, the requirements of God's law; and there is a sense in which Protestants do not regard the good works of regenerate persons, though polluted with sin, as mortal sins,—viz., if respect be had to their actual effects, and not to their intrinsic nature and demerit. Regenerate persons have been justified and admitted into the enjoyment of God's favour,—they have been adopted into His family, and they are regarded and treated by Him as His children. They are in Christ Jesus, and there is now no condemnation for them. Their sins are not now imputed to them or charged against them, to their condemnation, and do not, in point of fact, subject them to death and the curse of God. But if there be anything about them, in their character, principles, motives, or actions, which is really sinful, then they must *deserve* condemnation; and if they are not, in point of fact, subjected to it, then this must be, in spite of the anathema of the Council of Trent, *because* it is not imputed to them, or put down to their account,—charged against them with a view to their being condemned.

Another injustice commonly practised by Romish writers,—though not, it must be admitted, by the Council of Trent,—in explaining the state of the question upon this subject, is to represent Protestants as maintaining the general position, that the good works of righteous or regenerate men are mortal sins, and at the same time to insinuate that Protestants give this as the true and proper description of them. Now, Protestants do not deny that all regenerate men perform good works, and they admit that good works are good works, and should be so described. Of course they cannot be both good works and sins in the same respect; but it is quite possible that they may be, and therefore may be justly called, good, as being to a large extent, and with respect to their

leading distinguishing characteristics, good, accordant with God's commandments; and yet may in some way so come short of the requirements of the divine law as to be chargeable with sin, so that they may truly be said to be sins. When the question, indeed, is put generally and indefinitely, What they are? they should be described according to their leading and most palpable characters; and the answer to the question should just be, that they are good works. But if it be true also that there is something sinful about them, then the assertion that they are good works, though it be the true and proper answer to the question, What are they? does not contain the whole truth,—does not give a full and complete description of them; and of course this additional important element requires to be introduced.

Protestants, then, do not give it as the true and proper description of the good works of regenerate men, *that they are sins*, though this is the way in which the matter is usually represented by Bellarmine and other Popish controversialists. They say that they are good works; but finding, as they believe, abundant evidence in Scripture that they have all something sinful about them, they think they may also, without any impropriety, be called sins; not as if this was their leading primary character,—that by which they should be ordinarily and directly denominated,—but simply as being one true and real feature that ought to enter into a full description of them, inasmuch as, notwithstanding their substantial goodness or accordance with the requirements of God's law, they are also stained or polluted with what is sinful, and, therefore, in its own nature deserving of condemnation. The Council of Trent has not formally and precisely laid down, in a direct and positive form, the doctrine which it intended to teach in opposition to that which it anathematized in the canon above quoted; but by anathematizing the position that a righteous man sins in every good work,—by maintaining that a regenerate man is able in this life to fulfil the whole law of God, and to merit or deserve by his good works increase of grace and eternal life,—they fully warrant us in ascribing to the Church of Rome, as one of its recognised and binding doctrines, the position, —that men in this life may be entirely free from sin, and may and do perform actions which are not stained or polluted with anything sinful, or really deserving of condemnation attaching to them. Now, the opposite doctrine,—viz., that even regenerate

men have all something sinful about them, and that even their good works are all stained or polluted with an admixture of sin attaching to them,—was maintained by all the Reformers, and was strongly urged by them as overturning from the foundation the notions that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome about the merit of good works.

The subject divides itself into two parts,—the first including the moral constitution of renewed men, as comprehending their tendencies, affections, and incipient desires; and the second their actual motives and completed actions. In regard to the first of these parts or divisions of the subject, the question in dispute is identical with that which we discussed when examining the decree of the Council of Trent on original sin, and showing, in opposition to its decision, that baptism or regeneration does not wholly remove original corruption or depravity, and that concupiscence in the regenerate, as it was then explained, is sin. This point is of essential importance in regard to the whole question; and, indeed, it may be said to determine it: for if concupiscence, which is allowed to remain in the regenerate, is sin, as the Council of Trent admits that the Apostle Paul calls it, it must stain with an admixture of sinful pollution all the actions which they perform, until they have entirely escaped from the struggle between the spirit and the flesh. And Bellarmine accordingly admits that it is needful to the successful maintenance of the Popish doctrine, that the good works of regenerate men are not certainly and universally polluted with what is sinful, to remove out of the way the alleged sinfulness of concupiscence, and to show that it is not a sin, but only an infirmity or defect.*

As, however, we have already considered fully this subject of the sinfulness of concupiscence, we need not now dwell upon it at greater length, but may proceed to advert to the second branch of the subject,—viz., the actual motives and the completed actions of regenerate men; the actual motives differing from concupiscence, as including the first risings or motions of desires directed towards what is evil or unlawful, in this, that they are deliberately cherished in the mind, that they are fully consented to, and are necessarily connected with the outward actions of which they form the true proximate causes, and of which they determine the

* Bellarmin. De Justif., Lib. iv., c. xvii.

moral character. The direct Scripture proofs usually adduced by Romanists in support of the doctrine of their Church upon this point, are taken from those passages of Scripture which describe some men as perfectly blameless and pleasing to God, and their actions as good works, conformable to His law and acceptable in His sight, and those in which some of the saints appeal to, and plead, their own innocence and righteousness. There is, however, no statement in Scripture which clearly and definitely teaches, directly or by necessary consequence, that any man ever existed upon earth in a condition in which he had not something sinful about him, or ever performed an action which was free from an admixture of sinful pollution. Some of the scriptural statements to which Romanists refer in discussing this subject, might seem to warrant their conclusion, if there was no more information given us in Scripture regarding it than what is contained in them. But,—as we had occasion to remark before upon a similar topic, when considering the alleged effects of baptism or regeneration upon original corruption, and establishing the sinfulness of concupiscence,—they do not bear so directly and explicitly upon the point in dispute as to preclude the competence of producing, or even to make it unlikely that there may be actually produced, from other parts of Scripture, evidence that even the good works of regenerate men are stained with sinful pollution. At the most, these general statements about perfection, innocence, and good works, pleasing to God, etc., can have the effect only of throwing the *onus probandi* upon those who deny that the good works of regenerate men are wholly free from sin; and any further use or application of them, in the first instance, should be the more carefully guarded against, because the general tendency of men is to overrate their own excellence, and because the general tendency of the leading views presented in the word of God is to counteract this natural tendency of men. Our duty is to ascertain the *whole* of what God's word teaches upon every subject on which it touches, and to receive every doctrine which it inculcates as resting upon divine authority. We can be said to know the word of God upon any topic only when we have accurately ascertained the meaning and import of *all* that He has stated or indicated in His word regarding it, and when we have combined the different portions of information given us there—admitting each of them in its due order and connection—into the

general view which we lay down of the whole subject to which they relate.

Some instances there are, in which, when we collect together and combine into a general statement or doctrine the whole of the different portions of the information which the word of God furnishes upon some particular topic, we find it difficult to comprehend how the different truths or portions of truth which enter into the general doctrine can consist with each other or be brought into harmonious combination. But we must be careful of imagining that this of itself affords any sufficient reason for rejecting any one of them,—a notion which virtually assumes that our faculties, or powers of distinct comprehension, constitute the measure or standard of what is true or possible. If it can be shown from Scripture that the good works of regenerate men are still stained by some admixture of what is sinful, then this must be received as a portion of what Scripture teaches regarding them; it must enter into anything like a full statement of the Scripture doctrine upon the subject; and it must be allowed to explain or modify somewhat those general and indefinite statements about perfection and innocence, goodness and acceptableness, which, had no such doctrine been *also* taught in Scripture, might have seemed to point to a different conclusion. It is quite possible that the actions may be good and acceptable in their general character and leading features, so as to be rightly denominated, ordinarily and generally, by these terms, though it may be also true that they are not wholly free from sinful imperfection or pollution. They may have comparative or relative, though not unqualified or absolute, perfection and innocence; and this, indeed, is the only way in which the *whole* doctrine taught in God's word regarding them can be consistently and harmoniously embodied in a doctrinal statement. And it is remarkable that most of the arguments which Bellarmine founds upon the scriptural passages he adduces in support of the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject, require as their medium of probation, as the intervening idea through which alone they can be made to bear upon the point in dispute, *that* unfair misrepresentation of the proper *status quæstionis* which I have already exposed.

For instance, having adduced those passages which undoubtedly speak of the good works of regenerate persons, as

being good, excellent, and pleasing to God, he argues in this way: "Si opera omnia justorum essent peccata mortalia" (this is the position he ascribes to Protestants, and then the inference he draws is), "dicenda essent potius mala, quam bona. . . . Quomodo igitur Scriptura prædicat absolute opera bona, si non sunt bona, nisi secundum quid, sed absolute, et simpliciter mala? Omnino necesse est, ut vel Spiritus Sanctus in hac parte fallatur, vel Lutherus, et Calvinus erret."* Now, we can with perfect ease escape from both the horns of this dilemma; we are under no necessity of either maintaining that the Holy Spirit erred, or of admitting that Luther and Calvin erred, upon this subject. We admit that the works in question are, in their general character and leading features, good and pleasing to God, and of course may, and should be said, simply and generally, to be so: and this, we think, is all that can be shown to be necessarily implied in the scriptural passages which Bellarmine adduces; while we think, also, in perfect consistency with this, that there are sufficient materials furnished by the Holy Ghost in Scripture for proving that they are likewise *mala*, not *absolute et simpliciter*, according to the doctrine which Bellarmine unwarrantably ascribes to Luther and Calvin, but only *secundum quid*. In short, Luther and Calvin took in the whole doctrine of Scripture upon this subject, while Bellarmine and the Church of Rome have received only a portion of it; and have interpreted and applied that portion in such a way as to make it contradict what is also and equally taught in Scripture, and to be received with the same implicit submission.

The Church of Rome, then, can produce no sufficient evidence from Scripture in support of the doctrine which it teaches. Let us now briefly advert to the scriptural grounds on which the Protestant doctrine rests, without, however, attempting anything like a full exposition of them. The statements made by the Apostle Paul in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans are sufficient, not only to prove the proper sinfulness of concupiscence, —although, as we have observed, the proof of the proper sinfulness of concupiscence is sufficient of itself to prove that there is some sinful admixture about all the actions of regenerate men,—

* Bellarmin., De Justificat., Lib. iv., cap. xv.; opera, tom. iv.

but also to prove more directly the sinful deficiency and imperfection of all the actions which he performed,—and more especially his statements, "That which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do;" and, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not."* The force of this statement, so far as concerns the point now under consideration, lies very much in the word *κατεργάζεσθαι*, which means to work out thoroughly, or to carry a work out to completeness and perfection; and if the apostle, even when his will was to do good, did not find that he could even attain to completeness or perfection in his strivings after conformity to what God requires, this is the same thing as telling us that all his good works had still something sinful, or sinfully defective, attaching to them, and polluting them. The same conclusion is established by what we are taught in Scripture concerning the experience of David, and other inspired servants of God, who,—while they did on some occasions appeal to their own innocence or righteousness viewed comparatively, or as contrasted with the character of their enemies, and with the accusations which these enemies brought against them,—have also made it manifest, that they knew and felt that there was nothing about them, and no action they had ever performed or could perform, which could bear to be strictly investigated in the sight of God, or which did not stand in need of His unmerited mercy and compassion in order to its being accepted, and being not imputed to them, or charged against them, as an adequate ground of condemnation.

This doctrine is also established by what we are taught in Scripture, in many various ways and forms, as to the exceeding length and breadth of the requirements of God's law, and the actual conformity or obedience rendered to it even by renewed men; and this, of course, furnishes the leading direct and general proof of the position. A want of conformity to the divine law is sin, as well as a transgression of it; and the simple recollection that the divine law requires of men at all times to love God with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and that of course the absence or defect of this supreme love, as a feature of character, or as the principle and motive of an action, implies the

* Rom. vii. 15, 18, *τὸ γὰρ θέλειν παράκειταί μοι, τὸ δὲ κατεργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν, οὐχ εὑρίσκω.*

existence of a sinful want of conformity to what God requires, or of a sinful neglect of a duty which is incumbent, should be sufficient of itself to exclude from our minds all idea that even renewed men ever have performed, or can perform, any actions which are unstained by sinful imperfection and pollution. The experience, indeed, of the best men in all ages, viewed in connection with the scriptural statements as to the duty which God requires of us, is decidedly opposed to this proud and presumptuous notion; and it can scarcely be conceived to be possible that any man, who had ever felt anything of the power of religion, or been impressed with scriptural views of what God requires, and especially of that supreme and paramount love to Himself which ought ever to reign in our heart, and be the real source and the characterizing principle of all our actions, should venture to select any action he had ever performed, and assert that, viewed in its source and motive, in its substance and circumstances, it was unpolluted with sin and in full conformity with the requirements of God's law. Bishop Davenant, in discussing this subject, does not hesitate to say, "Qui in bonis suis actionibus hanc peccati adhæsionem non sentit, illum ego nunquam vel unam actionem bonam edidisse sentio."*

The sum and substance of the answer which Popish divines give to the scriptural passages that assert or imply the sinfulness of all men, even the regenerate, and the sinful imperfection of all that they do, viewed in comparison with the standard of God's law, is this,—that what may be sinful about them is not mortal but venial sin, *i.e.*, practically speaking, is no sin at all. Now, this indicates one of the reasons why Bellarmine was so anxious to represent Protestants as teaching the general position, that the good works of regenerate men are *mortal sins*, though the distinction between mortal and venial sins is rejected by them,—while it also illustrates the widely injurious application which Papists make of this anti-scriptural and dangerous distinction. Bellarmine says, that if the good works of righteous men are, as Protestants allege, stained and polluted with sin, this must arise from innate concupiscence, or the deficiency or shortcoming of love to God, *or* from the admixture with them of venial sins. Now, this statement is, upon the whole, correct, except in virtually ascribing to

* Davenant. Prelect., p. 427.

Protestants the distinction between mortal and venial sins, as understood by Papists. At the same time there is, as I have explained, a sense in which Protestants do not regard the sin which they impute to the good works of regenerate men as mortal; and they admit that, as the actions under consideration are, in the main, good, the sin which adheres to and pollutes them cannot be very heinous, as compared with other sins; though, if it be sin at all, it must, upon scriptural and Protestant principles, be in its own nature mortal, and deserving of the punishment which all sin merits. But, with this explanation and modification, Bellarmine's statement of the grounds and reasons of our ascription of sin to the good works of regenerate men, may be admitted to be substantially correct; and how does he dispose of them? By a simple and summary process in the application of the method of exhaustion. Concupiscence is not sin, but only an infirmity. The deficiency of our love to God,—or, as he chooses to explain it, or explain it away, our not loving Him so much as we will do when we reach heaven,—is a defect indeed, but not a fault and a sin, "defectus quidem est, sed culpa et peccatum non est;" and as to the venial sin that may be mixed up with these, why, "peccatum veniale non est contrarium caritati, nec proprie *contra* legem sed *præter* legem," *i.e.*, a venial sin is not contrary to charity or love, and is not properly *against* the law, but *beside* the law; or, in plain terms, is not a sin at all. This surely is to make the word of God of none effect by traditions, and to pervert the plainest and most important statements of Scripture; and to do this for the very purpose of eradicating Christian humility, inflating men with a most unwarranted and dangerous impression of their own worth and excellence, and cherishing a state of mind diametrically opposite to that which it is the manifest tendency and design of the whole gospel scheme of salvation to produce, and fraught with danger to men's souls. Nothing more need be said in opposition to a doctrine which requires to be defended by such arguments as these.

But it may be proper to advert to the illustration, thus incidentally afforded us, of the extensive and injurious application made by the Papists of their distinction between mortal and venial sins. Bellarmine manifests his deep sense of the importance of this distinction to the cause of Popery, by devoting the whole of the very first of his six books, "De Amissione gratiæ et statu peccati," to the establishment of it; and it is, indeed, of

much more importance in the Popish system than might at first sight appear. A great many scriptural statements require to be distorted or perverted, in order to procure for it something like countenance; and when it has been once proved or assumed, it is then employed, as we have seen, as a ready and convenient medium for distorting and perverting the meaning of many other portions of Scripture. Its direct, immediate, and most proper application, is to lead men to regard as very insignificant, and practically not sinful at all, many things which the word of God condemns as offensive to Him, and ruinous, if not repented of, to men's souls. The tendency of this is to deaden men's sense of moral responsibility, and to make them indifferent about their salvation, and careless about the means by which it is to be secured; or, what is virtually and practically the same thing, it disposes them to believe that guilt,—which, upon scriptural principles, can be washed away only by the blood of Christ, and through the exercise of faith and repentance,—may be expiated by external ordinances, by personal or other human satisfactions, and by priestly absolution and intercession. And, in this way, it has a powerful tendency to seduce depraved men into Popery, or to retain them there; while it enters largely into those corrupt influences by which the Popish system operates upon men's character and conduct, and accomplishes the design of its real author, by wrapping them up in security, and thus ruining their souls. By means of this distinction, a great deal of that in Scripture which is most directly fitted to arouse and alarm, is neutralized or enervated; a shield is provided to defend against the arrows of conviction, and a cloud is interposed to hide from men's view the true meaning of many portions of God's word,—the real import and right application of many statements which bear very directly upon the opening up of the true way of a sinner's salvation. If the doctrine of the Reformers, that an imperfection and pollution which is in its own nature sinful, and therefore deserving of punishment, attaches to all the good works even of regenerate men, be true, it manifestly overturns the common Popish notions about merit and supererogation. It proves that men cannot perform anything that is truly meritorious, since it shows that all their actions—in whatever way God for Christ's sake, and in virtue of the union to Him of those who perform them, may be pleased to regard and accept them—are, when

viewed simply in themselves, and according to their own real and intrinsic relation to the divine law, deserving of punishment and not of reward.*

I have dwelt the longer upon these subjects, because they really occupied a very prominent place in the theology of the Reformers, and because the reformed doctrine upon these points, which I have attempted to illustrate, was peculiarly offensive to the Romanists, as manifestly striking at the root of all those notions of human ability and human merit which the Romish Church has ever cherished, and on which a large portion of the system of Popery is based. If it be indeed true, as the word of God teaches us, that all the actions of unjustified and unregenerate men,—*i.e.*, of men before they become the recipients and subjects of God's justifying and converting grace,—are only and wholly sinful, having nothing truly good about them; and if it be also true, that all the works of men, even after they are justified and regenerated, though really good in their general elements and leading features, are likewise stained and polluted with something that is sinful,—*if all this be true*, then it plainly and necessarily follows that there cannot be either *meritum de congruo*, with respect to what Papists call the first justification; or *meritum de condigno*, with respect to what they call the second justification; and that individual men, at every step of the process by which they are delivered from guilt and ruin, and prepared for the enjoyment of heaven, are regarded and treated by God, and of course should ever be regarded by themselves and others, as the objects of His unmerited compassion and kindness,—the unworthy recipients of His undeserved mercy and grace. And while here we have to do with these principles chiefly in their bearing upon the formation of an accurate conception of the gospel method of salvation, of the scriptural scheme of theology, we would not omit, in conclusion, simply to point out their obvious and important bearing upon matters more immediately personal and practical. When these great principles are clearly understood and distinctly conceived, they must put an end at once to the laborious attempts, in which some men waste much time, of going about to establish a

* There is an admirable exposition and defence of Luther's statements upon this subject (in accordance with the first quotation given above from Bishop Davenant) in Calvin. "De libero arbitrio."

righteousness of their own, to prepare themselves, or to make themselves suitable or worthy, to receive the grace of God in Christ, instead of at once laying hold of the freely offered mercy and grace of the gospel; while in regard to others who, in the scriptural sense, are working out their own salvation through the grace of Christ administered to all who are united to Him by faith, they are well fitted to lead them to do so with "fear and trembling," by impressing them with a sense of the magnitude of the work, the arduousness of the struggle; and to constrain and enable them ever to cultivate profound humility, and a sense of their entire dependence upon the supplies of God's Spirit.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WILL.

The first three canons of the sixth session of the Council of Trent are directed, very unnecessarily, against the Pelagians, and are similar in substance to the canons of the Council of Orange in the sixth century, by which Pelagian and semi-Pelagian error was condemned. There is nothing in them to which any of the Reformers objected, and the only notice which Calvin takes of them in his "Antidote" is by responding—Amen. These anti-Pelagian canons, viewed in connection with the place which they occupy in the decrees of the Council of Trent, furnish an instance of what the history of theology has very often exhibited,—viz., of men being constrained by the force of the plain statements of Scripture in regard to the natural destitution and helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace as the source of all the holiness and all the happiness to which they ever attain, to make large admissions in favour of what all Calvinists, but not they exclusively, regard as the scriptural doctrine upon these subjects; admissions which, if followed out in a manly and upright way, would lead to thorough soundness of opinion regarding them, but which those who have been constrained to make them endeavour afterwards to explain away or to neutralize by the introduction of erroneous notions, which are really inconsistent with the admissions that had been wrung from them. This was very fully exhibited in most of the works written in the course of last century, and even in the present one, by divines of the Church of England, against the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, under the name of Calvinism, —as, for instance, in Bishop Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism. Many of these men, in deference to the plain meaning of scriptural language, made statements about the natural helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace, which in their fair and honest meaning involved all that Calvinists have ever contended

for upon these subjects, while they explained them away by the maintenance of positions which, if really true, should have prevented the admissions they had made. The books that have been written by Episcopalians against Calvinism are usually more Pelagian, and more thoroughly opposed to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, than the decrees of the Council of Trent. In its first three canons it admits that men cannot be justified by their own works without divine grace through Christ; that this grace of God through Christ is necessary, not only to enable men to do what is good more easily than they could have done without it, but to enable them to do it at all; and that without the preventing inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, a man cannot believe, hope, love, or repent, as it is necessary that he should do, in order that the grace of justification may be conferred upon him. And these doctrines, combined with what they had laid down in the previous session about original sin, as we have already explained it, seem sufficient, if fairly understood and applied, to overturn all notions of human ability and human merit. But we have already seen, in several instances, how they corrupt and pervert these general truths, which are expressed with a good deal of vagueness and generality, by laying down positions of a more definite and limited description, marked by an opposite tendency in their bearing upon the method of a sinner's salvation. And in a similar way we find that the three anti-Pelagian canons, with which they begin their deliverance upon justification, are immediately followed by two on the subject of free-will, in which the way is paved for introducing justification by works and human merit, and for ascribing, partly at least, to the powers and deserts of men themselves, and not wholly to the grace of God, the salvation of sinners.

This subject of free-will is, as it were, the connecting link between the doctrines of original sin and of divine grace—between men's natural condition as fallen, involved in guilt and depravity, and the way in which they are restored to favour, to holiness, and happiness. There is perhaps no subject which has occupied more of the time and attention of men of speculation. I shall not attempt anything like a general discussion of this extensive and intricate subject, but will merely endeavour to explain the views which were generally held upon this topic by the Reformers, and which have been embodied in the Confessions of the Protestant

churches, as contrasted with those taught by the Church of Rome and by Arminians.

There is one general observation, in regard to the way in which the subject was discussed at the time of the Reformation, that ought to be attended to,—viz., that the Reformers did not discuss it as a question in metaphysics, but as a question in theology; and that even with respect to what may be called its theological aspects, they did not give themselves much concern about any other view of it, than that in which it enters into the description which ought to be given from the word of God of fallen man—of man as we now find him; and as thus bearing upon the actual process by which he is restored to the favour and the image of God. And regarding the subject in this light, they were unanimous in asserting it as a doctrine of Scripture, that the will of man is in entire bondage with respect to all spiritual things, because of his depravity,—that fallen man, antecedently to the operation of divine grace, while perfectly free to will and to do evil, has no freedom of will by which he can do anything really good, or dispose or prepare himself for turning from sin and for receiving the grace of God. This was the doctrine of all the Reformers,—it is embodied in all the Reformed Confessions,—and is fully and explicitly set forth in the Confession of our own Church; and this, and this alone, is what the Reformers and the Reformed Confessions mean when, upon scriptural grounds, they deny to men, as they are, all freedom or liberty of will,—when they assert the entire servitude or bondage of the will of unrenewed men in reference to anything spiritually good. Other topics, both of a metaphysical and a theological kind, may have been introduced into the discussion of this question, and may have been appealed to as affording proofs or presumptions either on the one side or the other; but the true and proper question at issue was, whether man, fallen and unregenerate, had or had not any freedom or liberty of will *in the sense and to the effect above explained.* The Reformers asserted, and undertook to prove, the negative upon this question, and undertook to prove it from Scripture, as a portion of God's revealed truth,—not disdaining, indeed, but still not much concerned about, any corroboration which their doctrine might derive from psychological or metaphysical investigations into men's mental constitution and mental processes, and fully satisfied that a scriptural proof of this one position, which they thought them-

selves quite able to produce, afforded by itself an adequate basis, in an argumentative point of view, for those ulterior conclusions which they also derived from Scripture, in regard to the whole process of a sinner's salvation;—in short, for a full exposition of all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel.

This doctrine of the entire servitude or bondage of the will of fallen man, with reference to anything spiritually good, they regarded as involved in, or deducible from, the scriptural doctrine of the entire and complete depravity of human nature; while they taught also that it had its own distinct and appropriate scriptural evidence. The Council of Trent plainly insinuated, though it did not venture explicitly to assert, that the loss of the divine image in fallen man, or the corruption or depravity of his nature, was not total, but only partial; and there is one application which the council made of this virtual denial of the entire depravity of human nature, in their decision about the moral character of the works of unregenerate men, denying that they were wholly and altogether sinful. But the main use and application which they intended to make, and which they have made, of it, was as a foundation for the position which they laid down in opposition to the Reformers, that fallen man has still some freedom of will even in reference to what is spiritually good,—some natural power to do God's will,—and can thus do something which really and causally contributes to, or exerts a favourable influence upon, his own salvation. The Church of Rome would not have been very unwilling to have asserted more strongly and explicitly the corruption of human nature,—since she had effectually provided for taking it wholly away in baptism,—had it not been that a denial of man's entire corruption was necessary in order to the maintenance of her idol of free-will, or the assertion of the doctrine that fallen man has still some natural power to do what is spiritually good. The Council of Trent, accordingly, has expressly asserted that fallen man retains some freedom or liberty of will; but, according to the policy which was pursued in the formation of its decisions upon original sin, it has left this whole subject in so dubious and unsatisfactory a condition, that it is not very easy to say precisely what is its doctrine upon this subject, except that it is opposed to that of the Reformers. The council contents itself with anathematizing those who say that the free-will of man was lost and extinguished after the fall of Adam;

that free-will—*liberum arbitrium*—is, as Luther called it, a mere name, or a title without a reality, or was a figment introduced by Satan into the church; and with asserting* that free-will in fallen man, "minime extinctum esse, viribus licet attenuatum et inclinatum." Now, considering the discussions which had taken place, not only among the schoolmen, but between the Reformers and the Romanists, *previously* to the council, on the subject of free-will, the different meanings that might be, and have been, attached to the expression, and the different kinds or degrees of bondage or necessity that might be opposed to it (and all this had been fully explained and illustrated by Calvin in his very important treatise, "*De servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii*," published in 1543, in reply to Pighius, who attended the council), a decision so vague and general as this could scarcely be said to decide anything directly. The Reformers did not deny that fallen man still retained the will or the power of volition as a mental faculty,—that this continued, *with all its essential properties*, as a part of the general structure or framework of the mental constitution with which man was created. They admitted that the exercise of the will as a mental faculty, or the exercise of the power of volition, implied, in the very nature of the case, liberty or freedom, *in a certain sense*,—*i.e.*, what was commonly called spontaneity or freedom from necessity, in the sense of coaction or compulsion. This is the substance of the truth which is intended to be taught in our Confession of Faith, when it lays down, as its first and fundamental position upon the subject of free-will, the following doctrine,—viz., that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil." This is evidently intended as a great general truth, applicable to the will of man universally and in all circumstances, *after* as well as *before* the fall; and it asserts of man, thus generally considered, little if anything more than what is necessarily implied in his really possessing a power of volition,—a natural capacity of willing or choosing, and of doing this undetermined by any external constraint. The general structure or framework of man's mental constitution, including his power of volition, remains unaffected

* Session vi., c. i.

by the fall; and this power of volition continues to belong to him *as a rational being*, or to be exercised by him in connection with all that rationality implies.* Man by the fall was not changed into a stock or a stone, or into an irrational animal; he retained that rational power of volition which was a part of the general framework of his mental constitution, and in virtue of which he had, and still has, a natural capacity of willing and choosing spontaneously, and of carrying out his volitions into action. Man retained this natural power or capacity, and he was not, in consequence of the fall, subjected in the exercise of it to any external force or compulsion—to any influence out of himself, and apart from the exercise of his own power of volition, and from his own actual choice, which determined infallibly whether he should do good or evil.

These, then, are the two points asserted in the statement of our Confession in regard to that natural liberty with which God has endued the will of man,—viz., that there is nothing in the inherent structure of the natural power of volition itself, as it exists even in fallen man, and that there is no external force or compulsion exerted upon him, which certainly deprives him of a capacity of doing good as well as of doing evil. If it be true, as it certainly is, that fallen and unrenewed men do always in point of fact will or choose what is evil, and never what is good, the cause of this is not to be traced to any natural incapacity in their will or power of volition to will or choose good as well as evil, nor to any external force or compulsion brought to bear upon them from any quarter; for this would be inconsistent with that natural liberty with which God originally endued the will of man, and which it still retains and must retain. It must be traced to something else. The Reformers admitted all this, and *in this sense* would not have objected to the doctrine of the freedom of the will, though, as the phrase was then commonly used in a different sense as implying much more than this,—as implying a

* Turrettine, in speaking of this natural liberty,—this *lubentia rationalis* (power of choice), as he calls it,—"per quam homo facit quod lubet prævio rationis judicio," describes it as "adjunctum inseparabile agentis rationalis, quod illud in quovis statu comitatur, ut non possit esse rationale, quin eo ipso sit liberum, nec spoliari queat libertate, quin privetur etiam ratione. Quod evincit etiam liberum arbitrium absolute spectatum et in genere Entis nunquam ab homine tolli posse in quocunque versetur statu."—(Loc. x., Qu. iii., pp. 735-6.)

doctrine which they believed to be unscriptural and dangerous,—they generally thought it preferable to abstain from the use of the expression altogether, or to deny the freedom of the will, and to assert its actual bondage or servitude because of depravity, or as a consequence of the fall.* I may here remark by the way, though I do not mean to enter upon the discussion of the topic, that orthodox Protestant divines have usually held that this spontaneity,—this freedom from necessity in the sense of coaction or compulsion from any necessity, arising either from the natural structure and inherent capacity of the power of volition, or from the application of external force,—together with the power of giving effect to his volitions, is all that is necessary to make man responsible for his actions; and though this is a subject involved in extreme difficulties, I think it may be safely asserted that this at least has been proved,—viz., that no proof has been adduced that *more* than this is necessary as a foundation for responsibility,—no evidence has been brought forward that a rational being of whom this may be truly predicated, is *not* responsible for the evil which he performs—for the sins which he commits.

There is, however, another aspect in which the decision of the

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* Calvin distinctly admitted, in full accordance with our Confession, that a freedom, or liberty from necessity, in the sense of coaction or compulsion, "did so inhere in man by nature, that it could not in any way be taken from him:" "Sic homini naturaliter inhæret ut nequeat ullo modo eripi;" and yet, with his usual moderation and superiority to everything like cavilling or fighting about names and trifles, he made this statement about the use of the word liberty or free-will: "Si quis vocis hujus usum non prava intelligentia sibi permittat, per me quidem non vexabitur ob eam rem; sed quia sine ingenti periculo non posse retineri censeo, magno contra ecclesiæ bono futurum, si aboleatur: neque ipse usurpare velim, et alios, si me consulant, abstinere optarim."—(Instit., B. ii., cap. ii., sec. 8.) *Vide* De libero arbitrio Tractatus, pp. 215–6.

"Ego vero, quantum ad vocem pertinet, adhuc profiteor, quod in mea Institutione testatus sum, non adeo me superstitiosum esse in verbis, ut ejus causa velim contentionem aliquam movere: modo rei intelligentia sana maneat. Si coactioni opponitur libertas, liberum esse arbitrium, et fateor, et constanter assevero: ac pro hæretico habeo, quisquis secus sentiat. Si hoc, inquam, sensu liberum vocetur, quia non cogatur, aut violenter trahatur externo motu, sed sponte agatur sua, nihil moror. Sed cum aliud prorsus vulgo concipiant, dum hoc epitheton hominis voluntati attributum, vel audiunt, vel legunt, hæc causa est cur mihi displiceat." And again: "Homini arbitrium concedimus, idque spontaneum, ut si quid mali facit, sibi ac voluntariæ suæ electioni imputare debeat. Coactionem et violentiam tollimus, quia pugnet cum natura voluntatis, nec simul consistat. Liberum autem negamus, quia propter ingenitam homini pravitatem ad malum necessario feratur, nec nisi malum appetere queat."—De libero Arbitrio, pp. 215–16; *vide* also p. 229, Ed. Genevæ, 1576.

Council of Trent, asserting that free-will, though weakened, is not extinguished in fallen man, is chargeable with being vague and unsatisfactory; and this brings us nearer to the main topic of controversy between Protestants and the Church of Rome. Though Luther and Melanchthon had originally made some very strong and rash statements upon this subject, in which they seemed to assert the bondage of the will, and the necessity of men's actions in every sense, and to deny to men liberty or freedom in any sense, they had, long before the Council of Trent assembled, modified their views upon this subject, and had expressed themselves with greater caution and exactness. Indeed, in the Confession of Augsburg,—the most formal and solemn exposition of the doctrines of the Lutheran Church,—they had expressly said, "De libero arbitrio docent, quod humana voluntas habeat aliquam libertatem ad efficiendam civilem justitiam, et diligendas res rationi subjectas. Sed non habet vim sine Spiritu Sancto efficiendæ justitiæ spiritualis."* And, in accordance with this notion, it was common among the Reformers to ascribe to the will of man a certain power or freedom in actions of an external, civil, or merely moral character, which they did not ascribe to it in matters properly spiritual,—in actions directed immediately to God and the salvation of their souls, as considered in relation to the requirements of the divine law,—a fact which throws some light upon their general views on the subject of liberty and necessity. If the Council of Trent had intended to make their condemnation of the doctrines of the Reformers upon the subject of free-will precise and explicit, they would have adverted to this distinction, to which the Lutheran Reformers especially—whose statements were chiefly in their mind in the formation of the canons on this subject—attached much weight. At the same time the distinction is not one of great importance in a theological point of view; and there is no necessity for determining it,—so far at least as concerns the precise kind or degree of power or freedom of will which man has in regard to things civil and moral,†—in giving a summary of what the Scripture teaches upon the subject. Calvin did not regard this distinction as of any great importance in a theological point of view, though he held it to be true and real in itself,—maintaining, as Luther did, that man has a power and

* Confession of Augsburg, Art. 18. † Calvin. De Lib. Arb., p. 199.

freedom of will in regard to merely intellectual, moral, and civil things, which he has not in regard to things properly spiritual; and, indeed, he has given* a very full and striking description of what natural men can do in these respects, as contrasted with their impotence, helplessness, and inability in all matters pertaining to the salvation of their souls. The Scripture does not tell us anything about the causes or principles that ordinarily regulate or determine men's general exercise of their natural power of volition. This must be ascertained from an examination of man himself, of his mental constitution, and ordinary mental processes. It is a question of philosophy, and not of theology,—a question which the Scripture leaves us at liberty to determine by its own natural and appropriate evidence, unless men, upon alleged philosophical grounds, should deny what Scripture plainly teaches,—viz., that God has foreseen and fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass; or that He is ever exercising a most wise, holy, and powerful providence over all His creatures and all their actions, and thereby executing His decrees; or that, to use the language of our Confession, "fallen man (*i.e.*, man as he is) has lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation." I really do not know that there is any particular theory or doctrine concerning the liberty or bondage of the human will, which philosophers may deduce upon philosophical grounds from an examination of men's mental constitution and processes, that can be proved to be, in itself or in its consequences, opposed to anything taught us in the word of God, and that is therefore upon scriptural and theological grounds to be rejected.†

Although, however, the Council of Trent has thus abstained from giving any formal or explicit definition of what they mean by the freedom of will which they ascribe to fallen man, and which they said had been only weakened, and not destroyed, by the fall, —has given no deliverance as to its nature, grounds, or sphere of operations,—and in this way, perhaps, left room enough for the followers of Augustine, such as the Jansenists, remaining honestly in the communion of the Church of Rome (at least in the state of matters in which their doctrines were first promulgated,—for this state of the case has been greatly changed since

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* Instit., Lib. ii., c. ii.

† See the Reformers and Theology of the Reformation, p. 471, etc.—EDRS.

by the decisions pronounced in the course of the Jansenist controversy), yet there are sufficiently plain proofs that the council intended to deny the great doctrine of the Reformers,—that fallen man has no freedom of will, no actual available capacity for anything spiritually good,—and to assert that he retained the power of doing something that was really acceptable to God, and that contributed in some way, by its goodness and excellence, to his reception of divine grace, and his ultimate salvation. Accordingly, Bellarmine lays down this as his first and leading position, in stating the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject: "Homo ante omnem gratiam, liberum habet arbitrium, non solum ad opera naturalia, et moralia, sed etiam ad opera pietatis, et supernaturalia,"*—a position which is just precisely what the Council of Trent ought to have put forth explicitly, if they had intended to bring out their own sentiments fully and honestly, and to decide this point in a fair and manly way, by following out the principles laid down. This has been the doctrine generally taught by Romish writers; and the deviations from it which we find among them, have been towards views still more Pelagian. Baius and Quesnel taught the same doctrine as the Reformers upon this point; and the church's condemnation of the doctrine, as taught by them, was much more explicit than anything we find in the Council of Trent. Baius taught, "Liberum arbitrium sine gratiæ Dei adjutorio non nisi ad peccandum valet;" and Quesnel, "Peccator non est liber nisi ad malum;"† and by condemning these doctrines, the Church of Rome has become more clearly Pelagian than she could be proved to be from the decisions of the Council of Trent.

Sec. I.—*The Will before and after the Fall.*

In considering the grounds on which the Protestant doctrine on this subject rests, chiefly with the view of explaining somewhat more fully what the doctrine really is, it is necessary to advert to the opinion entertained by the Reformers as to the freedom or liberty of will man possessed before he fell from the condition in which he was created; because the truth is,—and the Reformers

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* Bellarmin. de Grat. et Lib. Arbit., Lib. vi., cap. xv.

† Dens' Theol., tom. ii., p. 407.

were fully alive to this consideration,—that the fall produced so great a change in men's character and condition, that there is scarcely any question in that department of theological science,—which is now often called Anthropology, or a view of what Scripture teaches as to what man is,—which can be fully and correctly stated and explained without a reference to the difference that subsists between man fallen and man unfallen. Now upon this point it is certain that the Reformers in general held that man, before he fell, had a liberty or freedom of will which fallen man does not possess,—a freedom or liberty of will similar to that which Pelagians and Socinians usually ascribe to man as he is.* And it is in full accordance with the theology of the Reformation, that our Confession of Faith, immediately after laying down the position, formerly quoted and explained, about the natural liberty with which God has endued the will of man, and which it has retained amidst all changes, proceeds thus: "Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it;" and, in like manner, in the Catechisms it is said, that "our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will," sinned and fell. I refer to this subject at present, chiefly for the purpose of pointing out that *the fact of this doctrine having been held* throws much light upon the general views maintained upon this whole subject by the Reformers, and by the compilers of our standards. They ascribe to man freedom or liberty of will,—full power to will and to do what was spiritually good before the fall, and denied it to him after he had fallen.

Now, this fact affords materials for some important conclusions as to the real nature of the necessity or bondage which they ascribed to the will of fallen man, and the grounds on which they rested their doctrine regarding it. The compilers of our standards believed, as the Reformers did, that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, and that, of course, He had fore-ordained the fall of Adam, which thus consequently became in a certain sense necessary—necessary, by what was called the necessity of events, or the necessity of immutability. Still, they

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* Calvin repeatedly quotes with approbation the striking and pithy saying of Augustine, that man, by making a bad use of his free-will, lost both himself and it: "Libero arbitrio male usus, homo, et se perdidit, et ipsum."—Antidotum; Tractatus, p. 403. Ed. Genev., 1576.

also believed that man fell, *because* he was left to the freedom of his own will, and because, having free-will, he freely willed or chose to sin. It follows from their holding at once *both* these doctrines, that they did not regard God's fore-ordination of the event as inconsistent with man's liberty of will; and, of course, they did not, and could not, regard the bondage which they ascribed specially to the will of fallen man as in any way, or to any extent, proceeding from, or caused by, God's decrees with respect to their actions. They believed, further, that God's providence, executing His decrees, was concerned in the fall of Adam, in the same sense, and to the same extent, to which it is concerned in the sinful actions which men perform now; but neither did they regard this as taking away his liberty, and neither of course did they consider the entire subjection of the will of fallen man to sin, or the actual sins which he commits, as the effect or result of that providence which God constantly exercises over all His creatures and all their actions. They believed,—and there is, indeed, no reason to doubt,—that the general laws which regulate men's mental processes,—which determine, for instance, the connection (invariable and necessary, or otherwise) between the conclusions of the judgment and the acts of volition,—operate now as they did before the fall, because the general framework of man's mental constitution remains unchanged, and because all the departments of his intellectual and moral constitution are equally vitiated, so far as spiritual things are concerned, according to their respective natures and functions, by the introduction of depravity. But the operation of these laws, whatever they may be, did not deprive man, unfallen, of his freedom or liberty of will, and of course it is not the cause of the bondage or servitude to which his will is now subjected. Man, according to the doctrine of the Reformers and of our standards, before he fell had freedom or liberty of will, notwithstanding God's fore-ordination and providence, and notwithstanding any laws, whatever these may be, which God had impressed upon his mental constitution for the regulation of his mental processes. He no longer has *this* freedom or liberty of will, but, on the contrary, his will is in bondage or subjection to sin; so that, in point of fact, he can only will or choose what is sinful, and not what is spiritually good. The inference is unavoidable, that, according to this scheme of doctrine, the necessity, or bondage to sin, which now attaches to the human will, is a pro-

perty of man, not simply as a creature, but as a fallen creature,—not springing from his mere relation to God, as the fore-ordainer of all things, and the actual ruler and governor of the world, nor from the mere operation of laws which God has impressed upon the general structure and framework of man's mental constitution, but from a cause distinct from all these—from something superinduced upon his character and condition by the fall.

The decree of God, fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass—the providence which He is ever exercising over all His creatures and all their actions—the laws which He has impressed upon man's mental constitution for the regulation of his mental processes,—*may* indeed produce or imply some sort of necessity or bondage as attaching to the human will—may be inconsistent with freedom or liberty of will in the sense in which it is often ascribed to men, and I have no doubt this can be shown to be the case; but *if it be true*, as *our standards* plainly teach, that, *all these things being the same*, man once had a freedom or liberty of will which he has not now, it follows that there does now attach to men a necessity or bondage which is not directly dependent upon these causes, as to its actual existence and operation, and which, therefore, may *be proved*, by its own direct appropriate evidence, to exist and to operate, without requiring the proof or the assumption of any of these doctrines as a necessary medium of probation, and though it could not be shown to follow from them in the way of inference or conclusion. My object in making these observations is not to give any opinion upon the arguments in support of necessity, as it is commonly understood, that may be deduced from fore-ordination, providence, and the laws that regulate men's mental processes, but merely to show that, according to the judgment of the Reformers, and of the compilers of our standards, there is a necessity or bondage attaching to the will of man as fallen, which is not involved in, or deducible from, these doctrines, and does not necessarily require a previous proof of them, or of any of them, in order to its being sufficiently established. The *only* necessity or bondage taught by the Reformers and by the standards of our church as a scriptural doctrine, is that which attaches to man as fallen, and is traceable to the depravity which the fall introduced, as its source or cause. And it is important, I think, that this doctrine should be viewed by itself, in its own place, in its native independence, and in connection with its own

distinct and appropriate evidence. The Reformers and the compilers of our standards did not see any other kind or species of necessity or bondage to be taught in Scripture, and did not regard the assertion of any other as *necessary* for the full exposition of the scheme of evangelical truth. The question, whether liberty of will, in the common sense, is shut out, and necessity established, by a survey of the laws that regulate our mental processes, is a question in philosophy and not in theology, and it is one on which I cannot say that I have formed a very decided opinion. I am inclined, upon the whole, to think that liberty of will, as that phrase is commonly employed, can be disproved, and that necessity can be established upon metaphysical or philosophical grounds; but I do not consider myself called upon to maintain either side of this question by anything contained in Scripture or the standards of our church; and I rejoice to think that, upon the grounds which I have endeavoured to explain, the doctrine of the utter bondage of the will of fallen man, in reference to anything spiritually good, because of depravity, is not dependent for its evidence upon the settlement of any merely philosophical question.

With respect to the bearing of the fore-ordination and providence of God upon the question of the liberty or bondage of the will,—or, what is virtually the same thing, with respect to the liberty or bondage of the will of man, viewed, not as fallen and depraved, but simply as a creature entirely dependent upon God, and directed and governed by Him according to His good pleasure,—the word of God and the standards of our church say nothing beyond this,—that man before his fall, or viewed simply as a creature, had, notwithstanding God's fore-ordination and providence, a freedom and power to will and to do good, which fallen man has not. The Reformers, while all strenuously maintaining the utter bondage of the will of fallen man as a scriptural truth, usually declined to speculate upon the bearing of God's fore-ordination and providence upon the freedom of the will of His creatures, simply as such, or, what is the same thing, of man before the fall, as a subject mysterious and incomprehensible in its own nature,—one on which scarcely any definite information was given us in Scripture, and one the settlement of which was not necessary for the full exposition of the scheme of gospel truth; and Calvin, in particular, who never made such strong statements as Luther and Melanchthon did in their earlier works, about the connection between fore-ordi-

nation and necessity, has, with his usual caution and wisdom, set forth these views upon many occasions.*

This practice of distinguishing between the freedom of man's will in his unfallen and in his fallen condition was not introduced by the Reformers. The distinction had been fully brought out and applied by Augustine. It had a place in the speculations of the schoolmen. Peter Lombard, in his four Books of Sentences, the text-book of the Scholastic Theology,† distinguishes and explains the freedom of man's will in his four-fold state,—viz., before the fall; after the fall, but before regeneration; after regeneration in this life; and, lastly, after the resurrection in heaven. The subject is explained in these same aspects in the Formulà Concordiæ of the Lutheran Church‡ very much as it is in our own Confession of Faith.§ This view of the matter is also usually taken in the works of the great theologians of the seventeenth century. But in more modern times the tendency has rather been to consider the whole subject of the freedom of the will as one great general topic of investigation, and to examine it chiefly upon philosophical grounds, without much attention, comparatively, to its theological relations, and to the distinctions and divisions which the generally admitted doctrines of theology required to be introduced into it. In this way, we think that the respective provinces of the philosopher and the theologian have been somewhat confounded, to the injury, probably, of both parties; a good deal of confusion has been introduced into the whole subject, and an impression has been created, that the maintenance of some of the

* The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation, p. 365.—Edrs.

† Lib. ii., Dist. xxv., pp. 160–1.

‡ Formula Concordiæ, De Lib. Arbit.

§ Indeed, in this important work, which was prepared and adopted as symbolical by the Lutherans in the latter part of the seventeenth century, not only is the subject of free-will explained under the same four-fold division as in our Confession, but the precise doctrines set forth under each head are identical with those taught by the Westminster Divines. The Formula Concordiæ thus states the matter: "Quum hominis voluntas quadruplicem habeat considerationem, 1mo, ante lapsum; 2ndo, post lapsum; 3tio, post regenerationem; 4to, post resurrectionem carnis: nunc *quæstio præcipua est tantum* de voluntate et viribus hominis in secundo statu." And upon this subject they teach, "Quod hominis intellectus et ratio in rebus spiritualibus prorsus sint cœca, nihilque propriis viribus intelligere possint." And further, with more direct reference to the will, they teach, "Voluntatem hominis nondum renatam non tantum a Deo esse aversam, verum etiam inimicam Deo factam, ita, ut tantummodo ea velit et cupiat, iisque dilectetur, quæ mala sunt, et voluntati divinæ repugnant."

most important of the peculiar doctrines of the Christian system is much more intimately connected with, and much more entirely dependent upon, the establishment of certain *philosophical* theories, than an accurate and comprehensive view of the whole subject would warrant. A very general impression prevails, first, that the doctrine of the liberty of the will, as implying what is commonly called a liberty of indifference, and the self-determining power of the will, is an essential part of the Arminian system of theology,—*i.e.*, that, on the one hand, Arminianism requires it as a part of the position which it must occupy,—and that, on the other hand, the proof or admission of it establishes Arminianism; and, secondly, that an exactly similar relation subsists between the doctrine of philosophical necessity and the Calvinistic system of theology. There may be some foundation for this impression, in so far as Arminianism is concerned, though upon the consideration of this point I do not mean to enter. What I wish to notice is, that whether the impression be just or not, in so far as concerns liberty and Arminianism, I do not regard it as well founded, in so far as philosophical necessity and the Calvinistic system of theology are concerned, and that I reckon this an important advantage to Calvinism in an argumentative point of view.

The doctrine of philosophical necessity is a certain theory or opinion as to the principles that regulate the exercise of the will of man as a faculty of his nature, and that determine the production of men's volitions, and their consequent actions. The theory is usually founded partly upon an examination of our mental processes themselves in the light of consciousness,—certainly the most direct and legitimate source of evidence upon the subject,—and partly upon certain deductions from the foreknowledge, foreordination, and providence of God, in their supposed bearing upon the volitions and actions of men. This latter department of topics, and the proofs they afford, may be contemplated either in the light of revelation or of natural religion,—which also suggests some information regarding them; and, accordingly, the doctrine of philosophical necessity, in the same sense in which it has been maintained by many Calvinistic divines, has been very ably defended ***upon both these grounds***, by men who did not believe in the authority of revelation,—such as Hobbes and Collins. It is, however, only the first class of proofs that can really establish the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as usually understood,—*i.e.* as it is

opposed to liberty of indifference and the self-determining power of the will; for although conclusive arguments may be deduced from the foreknowledge, fore-ordination, and providence of God, in favour of the necessity of volitions and actions,—*i.e.*, in favour of the *certainty* of their being just what they are, and of the improbability in some sense of their being other than they are,—yet no conclusion can be validly deduced from this source as to the *immediate* or *approximate* cause of our volitions, or the precise provision made in our mental constitution, and in the laws that regulate our mental processes, for effecting the result, though foreseen and fore-ordained, and therefore in itself certain; unless, indeed, it be contended that it is *impossible* for God certainly to foresee and certainly to order the volitions and actions of men without having established those very laws for the regulation of their mental processes, and especially for the determination of their volitions, which the doctrine of philosophical necessity involves; and this is a position which, from the nature of the case, it is scarcely possible to establish. There can seldom be a very secure ground for deduction or inference, when it is needful, with that view, to take up the position, that God *could* not have accomplished His purpose, or effected a particular result with certainty, except only in one way, and by some one specified provision. Even then, though it could be proved or rendered probable on merely psychological or metaphysical grounds, that the doctrine of philosophical necessity is unfounded, and that, on the contrary, man has a liberty of indifference, and his will a self-determining power, we would not regard ourselves as constrained to abandon the Calvinistic doctrines concerning the predestination and providence of God, inasmuch as, leaving every other consideration out of view, these doctrines could merely prove that the certainty of the event or result is in some way provided for and secured, and would not afford any adequate grounds for the conclusion that God *could not* have accomplished this in the case of a class of rational and responsible beings who were mentally constituted in accordance with the libertarian view of the laws that regulate their mental processes, and determine their volitions. If the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as opposed to a liberty of indifference and a self-determining power in the will, can be established by the direct evidence appropriately applicable to it as a psychological question,—as I am inclined to think it can,—then this affords a strong confirmation of

the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and providence: for, on the assumption of the truth of this philosophical position, inferences may be deduced from it in support of these theological doctrines which it does not seem practicable to evade, except by taking refuge in atheism; but, upon the ground which has been stated, it does not seem to me to follow, *è converso*, that if this philosophical position is disproved, the theological doctrines must in consequence be abandoned. And if this view be a sound one, it certainly tends to illustrate the firmness of the foundation on which the Calvinistic argument rests.*

But it is not my intention to discuss this subject; and I must return to the topic which has suggested these observations,—viz., that the Reformers and the older Calvinistic divines ascribed to man before his fall a freedom or liberty of will which they denied to man *as he is*, and that the *only* necessity or bondage which they ascribed to man as he is, was an inability to will what is spiritually good and acceptable to God, as a result or consequence simply of the entire depravity of his moral nature,—*i.e.*, of his actual dispositions and tendencies. This was the *only* necessity they advocated as having anything like direct and explicit sanction from Scripture, or as indispensably necessary to the exposition and defence of their system of theology,—not a necessity deduced from anything in God's purposes and providence, or from anything in men's mental constitution applicable to men, as men, or simply as creatures, but from a special feature in men's character as fallen and depraved. This necessity or bondage under which they held man fallen, as distinguished from man unfallen, to lie, resolved itself into the entire absence in fallen man of holy and good dispositions or tendencies, and the prevalence in his moral nature of what is ungodly and depraved; and thus stood entirely distinct from, and independent of, those wider and more general considerations, whether philosophical or theological, applicable to man as man, having a certain mental constitution, or as a dependent creature and subject of God, on the ground of which the controversy about liberty and necessity has been of late commonly conducted.

I have said that, in modern times, this distinction between the case of man before and after his fall has been too much neglected by theologians, even by those who admitted the distinction, and

* The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation, pp. 508, etc.—EDRS.

would have defended it if they had been led to discuss it. It has been too much absorbed or thrown into the background, and kept out of view by the more general subject of liberty and necessity, in the form in which it has been commonly treated. This result, I think, has been injurious, and unfavourable to the interests of sound doctrine.*

Sec. II.—*The Bondage of the Will.*

We proceed now more directly, though very briefly, to explain the great doctrine, taught by all the Reformers and condemned by the Council of Trent, with respect to man's want of free-will, or the utter bondage or servitude of the will of fallen man to sin because of depravity; and after the explanations already given of the relation of this doctrine to other topics, we shall not consider it needful to do more than advert to the grounds on which it has been advocated, and to those on which it has been opposed. Having had occasion to quote and comment upon the first two propositions in the ninth chapter of our Confession of Faith, which treats of free-will,—setting forth, first, the natural liberty with which God hath endowed the will of man, and which it retains, and must retain, in all circumstances; and, secondly, the full freedom and power which man in his state of innocency had to do God's will,—we shall continue to follow its guidance, because it exhibits upon this, as upon most other topics, a *more* precise and accurate statement of the leading doctrines taught in Scripture and promulgated by the Reformers, than any other production with which we are acquainted. The doctrine in question is thus stated in our Confession: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

If man, in his natural state, cannot do anything spiritually good, the cause, the sole proximate cause of this is, that he does not will to do it, because by universal admission man has the power (of course within a certain range, since he is not omnipotent) to do what he wills to do. And if no man in his natural

* The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation, pp. 515, etc.—Edrs.

condition has ever in fact done, or willed to do, anything spiritually good, the inference is well warranted, that men are not naturally able to will what is good; for had such an ability existed, it would certainly have been more or less put forth in act by some men. Besides the connection thus plainly subsisting between the more general doctrine of the entire corruption of man's moral nature, and his inability to will what is spiritually good, there are some of the scriptural descriptions of man's natural character and condition which bear more directly and immediately upon this specific topic,—such as those which represent natural men as the servants or slaves of sin, as led captive by Satan at his will,—while it is certain that Satan exerts no external compulsion upon them; and especially those which describe them as dead in sin, and blind and darkened in their minds. We cannot dwell upon these passages, and we need not repeat the cautions, necessary to be observed in treating of original sin, against either passively and carelessly forming only a very vague and indefinite conception of their import, or actively and zealously explaining them away, departing from what they naturally and obviously mean or imply, without a clear scriptural warrant enforcing the necessity of the deviation, and pointing out the extent to which it is to be carried.

If man, in his natural state, without divine grace, cannot turn from sin unto God, or prepare himself for turning, this must arise wholly from his inability to *will* to do it; for there is no external obstacle to his turning to God, or doing anything spiritually good. If he does not turn from sin to God, it is because he does not will to turn; and if he cannot turn, it is because he has no ability to will to turn. He is just as able to turn to God, and to will to turn to God, as he is to do, or to will to do, any other thing that is spiritually good; for there is certainly no *peculiar* obstacle, external or internal, in the way of men turning from sin unto God, that does not equally stand in the way of their doing anything else which He requires, or which is pleasing and acceptable to Him. If, then, natural men cannot by their own strength turn to God, they have no ability of will to *anything* spiritually good. Now, we have very solemn and explicit declarations of our Saviour, that no man is able to come to Him (which is virtually identical, or inseparably connected, with turning from sin unto God), except it be given him of the Father—except the Father draw him; *i.e.*,—as

can be easily and fully proved from Scripture,—unless and until he become the subject of the omnipotent gracious agency of the Holy Spirit. And, besides, the general descriptions given us in Scripture of the change which is effected,—of the result which is produced when any man does come to Christ or turn to God,—are manifestly fitted and intended to convey to us the idea that man, by the exercise of his own natural power of volition, did not, and could not, do anything to commence it, or set the process in operation. I refer, of course, more especially to those passages where this process is not only ascribed wholly to God's agency, but where it is more specifically described as an opening of the eyes of the blind—a creation—the creation of a new heart—a new birth—a resurrection from the dead. Unless these statements are to be wholly explained away, and perverted from their natural and obvious meaning,—and this can be done *legitimately* only when it is proved that Scripture itself warrants and requires it,—they must be regarded as teaching us that, in the *originating* of the process of turning to God, man's own natural power of volition can exert no real influence, no proper efficiency; and if so, that, upon the grounds already explained, he has no ability of will to *anything* spiritually good accompanying salvation. Whatever proves, in general, that man in his fallen condition has no ability of will to anything spiritually good, proves equally, in particular, that he cannot will to turn to God; while anything which proves that men by their own strength are unable to will to come to Christ or to turn to God, not only directly establishes the great practical conclusion which gives to the general doctrine of man's inability to will what is good its chief importance, but, by the process of thought already explained, establishes that general doctrine itself: and by the application of these obvious considerations, the doctrine of man's inability in his natural state to will anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, may be shown to be supported by an extensive range of scriptural statements, as well as by the analogy of faith,—by its indissoluble connection with other important scriptural doctrines.

Sec. III.—*Bondage of the Will—Objections.*

With respect to the objections to this doctrine of fallen man's inability to will anything spiritually good or to turn to God, or the

grounds and reasons on which it is opposed by Romanists and others, the first and most important consideration to be attended to is this —that it is not alleged that there is any specific statement in Scripture which *directly* opposes or contradicts it, *i.e.*, it is not alleged that any statement can be produced from the word of God which directly, or by anything like plain implication, tells us that fallen man *has* any ability of will to anything spiritually good, or is able by his own strength to turn to God, or to prepare himself thereunto. The objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of the Reformers, and of our standards, upon this subject, are not inferences or deductions from *specific* statements of Scripture, alleged to bear immediately upon the point in dispute, but only inferences or deductions from certain *general* principles which Scripture is alleged to sanction. And there is an important difference, *in point of certainty*, between these two classes of inferences or deductions. The objections to the doctrine of fallen man's inability may be said to be all ultimately resolvable into this one general position, that in Scripture commands and exhortations are addressed to men, requiring them to abstain from sin and to turn to God; that they are responsible for rendering obedience to these commands, and incur guilt by disobeying them; and that these commands would not have been issued, that this responsibility would not attach to them, and that this guilt could not be incurred, unless they were able to will and to do the things commanded. Now, it is obvious that this whole argument resolves, as to its sole real basis and foundation, not into anything which is actually stated in Scripture, directly or by implication, but into certain notions with respect to the *reasons* why God issued these commands or exhortations,—the grounds on which alone moral responsibility can rest; subjects, both of which are in their very nature profound and mysterious, which do not lie very fully within the range or cognisance of our faculties, and with respect to which men are certainly not entitled to pronounce dogmatically through the mere application of their own powers of reasoning, and unless guided plainly and distinctly by the Scriptures themselves.

The argument or objection, though in reality one, may be said to resolve itself into these two positions: First, God would not, or rather could not, have addressed such commands or exhortations to men unless they were able to obey them; and the reason commonly assigned is, that it could at least serve no good purpose

to issue commands to men to which they were unable to render obedience; and, secondly, an ability to do, and of course to will to do, what is commanded, is necessary in order that men may incur responsibility and guilt by not doing it. Now, it is admitted that God commands fallen men—men as they are—to do what is spiritually good, and to turn unto Himself, and that they are responsible, or incur guilt, by not doing what is thus commanded; and this being universally admitted as clear and certain from Scripture, the question is, How are the inferences or conclusions of the objectors to be met? This subject has been most abundantly discussed in every age, and leads into the examination of some questions which never have been solved, and never will be solved in man's present condition. I can make only a few remarks upon it, rather in the way of indicating where the answers to the objections lie, than of expounding or developing them. Let it be remembered, then, what is the true state or condition of the argument. There has been produced from Scripture what seems to be very strong and conclusive evidence that fallen man has wholly lost, and does not now possess, any ability of will to anything spiritually good accompanying salvation,—evidence which cannot be *directly* answered or disposed of, and which is not contradicted by anything like direct evidence from Scripture in support of the opposite position; and the proper question is, Is there anything in the general reasonings of the objectors above stated, that is so clearly and certainly *both* true and relevant, as to warrant us, on that ground alone,—*for there is no other*,—summarily to reject this evidence, or to resolve at all hazards to explain it away?

With respect to the first and less important of the two positions into which it has been shown that the argument of the objectors resolves itself,—viz., that God could not, or would not, have issued such commands and exhortations, unless men had been able to obey them,—it is, obviously enough, unwarranted and presumptuous in its general character and complexion, as it assumes that men are capable of judging of the reasons, nay, of all the reasons, that could or should regulate the divine procedure. This general and radical defect is quite sufficient to deprive the argument founded upon it of all such certain and concluding power or cogency, as to make it adequate to overturn or neutralize the strength of the direct scriptural evidence on which the doctrine of man's inability

rests. We are entitled to set aside this objection as unsatisfactory and insufficient, simply upon the ground that, for aught the objectors know or can establish, God *might* have had good and sufficient reasons for addressing such commands and exhortations to men, even though they were unable to obey them. The objector virtually asserts that God *could* have no good reasons for addressing such commands to men, unless they were able to obey them. We meet this with the counter assertion, that He might have sufficient reasons for addressing such commands to men, though they were unable to comply with them; and as, from the condition of the argument, as above explained, the *onus probandi* lies upon the objectors, our mere counter assertion is a conclusive bar to their progress and success, unless they can produce a positive proof in support of their position, or a positive disproof of ours.

But though we are entitled to stop here, and to hold the objection sufficiently disposed of in this way, we do not need to confine ourselves within the strict rules of logical requirement, and can adduce materials which bear much more directly upon the disposal of the objection; and especially we can show that there are indications given us in Scripture of reasons that explain to some extent *why* these commands and exhortations were addressed to men, *though* they were unable to obey them. This subject is fully discussed and illustrated in Luther's great work, "De Servo Arbitrio," in reply to Erasmus, which is, perhaps, upon the whole, the finest specimen he has left of his talents as a theologian, and which is thoroughly Calvinistic in its doctrinal views. It is discussed by Calvin himself in the fifth chapter of the second book of his Institutes, and in his treatise on Free-will; and there is a brief but very able summary of the views generally held by Calvinists on this topic in Turretine.*

The commands and exhortations addressed to men by God in Scripture, in reference to things spiritual, may be divided into two classes: First, those which are directly comprehended under the original moral law, and obligatory upon men, simply as rational and responsible creatures, and which are summed up in the duty of loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves; and, secondly, those which have reference more

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* Calvin. Instit., Lib. ii., c. v., s. 6–9; Turrettin. Loc. x., Q. 4, secs. 22–24, tom. i., pp. 746–7; Calvin. de Lib. Arbit. Tractatus, pp. 276–7.

immediately to the remedial scheme of grace revealed to men for their salvation, such as repentance or conversion—turning from sin unto God—faith in Christ Jesus, and thereafter progressive holiness. These two classes of obligations might, for brevity's sake, be considered as comprehended in, or indicated by, the two great duties of love to God and faith in Christ. That these things are imposed upon men by being expressly commanded by God in His word,—that men are responsible for doing them, and incur guilt by not doing them,—is unquestionable; while yet we allege that men in their natural condition are unable to do them, *because* unable to will to do them. We are not, however, at present considering them in connection with the general subjects of responsibility and its grounds,—to that we shall afterwards advert more fully,—but only in connection with the more limited objection that there *could* be no ground for imposing such commands unless men were able to obey them. After the explanations which have already been given, we have now simply to consider whether we can discover or imagine any reasonable grounds why these commands might be imposed upon fallen men, notwithstanding their inability to comply with them.

In regard to the *first* class,—those directly comprehended in the original moral law, and summed up in supreme love to God,—there is no difficulty in seeing the reasons why God might address such commands to fallen and depraved men. The moral law is a transcript of God's moral perfections, and must ever continue unchangeable. It must always be binding, in all its extent, upon all rational and responsible creatures, from the very condition of their existence, from their necessary relation to God. It constitutes the only accurate representation of the duty universally and at all times incumbent upon rational beings—the duty which God must of necessity impose upon and require of them. Man was able to obey this law, to discharge this whole duty, in the condition in which he was created. If he is now in a different condition,—one in which he is no longer able to discharge this duty,—this does not remove or invalidate his obligation to perform it; it does not affect the reasonableness and propriety of God, on the ground of His own perfections, and of the relation in which He stands to His creatures, proclaiming and imposing this obligation —requiring of men to do what is still as much as ever incumbent upon them. On these grounds, there is no difficulty in seeing

that there are reasons—and this is the only point we have at *present* to do with—why God might, or rather would, continue to require of men to love Him with all their heart, even although they were no longer able to comply with this requirement. It was right and expedient that men should still have the moral law, in all the length and breadth of its requirements, enforced upon them, as a means of knowledge and a means of conviction, even though it was no longer directly available as an actual standard which they were in fact able to comply with. Notwithstanding our inability to render obedience to it, it is still available and useful as a means of knowledge,—as affording us materials of knowing God's character, and the relation in which we stand to Him and the duty which He requires and must require of us. It is available and useful also,—nay, necessary,—as a means of conviction—conviction of our sin and of our *inability*. If men are sinners, it is important that they should be aware of this. The only process which is directly fitted in its own nature to effect this, is stating and enforcing duty,—calling upon men to do what is incumbent upon them,—and then pointing out where and how far they come short. If men are really unable to discharge the duties incumbent upon them, it is important that they should be aware of this feature in their condition; and the only means of securing this, in accordance with the principles of their constitution as rational beings, is by requiring of them to do what is obligatory upon them.

It is quite unreasonable, then, to assume, or lay down as a principle, that the *only* consideration which justifies or explains the imposition of a command is, that men may obey it, as implying that they *can* obey it, since it is plain enough that there are reasons which may warrant or require the imposition of a command, even when men cannot obey it; and that good may result from the imposition of it, even in these circumstances. The objection which we are considering, assumes that when God addresses a command to men, He thereby, by the mere fact of issuing the command, tells them that they are able to obey it; but we have said enough, we think, to show not only that a statement to this effect is not necessarily implied in the issuing of the command, but that it is quite possible, at least, that the very object of issuing the command may be to teach and to

impress a position *precisely the reverse* of this,—viz., that they are *not* able to obey it. There is nothing unreasonable or improbable in this, and therefore the assumption of the certain truth of the opposite position affords no sufficient ground for setting aside the strong scriptural evidence we can adduce to prove that this is indeed the actual state of the case,—and that one object which God has in view in requiring of fallen men the performance of the whole duty which is incumbent upon them, is just to convince them that they cannot discharge it in their own strength, or without the assistance of His special grace, without the supernatural agency of His own Spirit.

With respect to the *other* class of spiritual duties required of men in Scripture, those which have more immediate reference to the remedial scheme of grace,—viz., repentance and faith,—there are some points in which they differ from those directly comprehended under the original moral law; but these points of difference are not such as materially to affect our present argument. It is true, indeed, that God was not bound in the same sense, and on the same grounds, to impose, or to continue the imposition of these duties; and that men were not originally, and by the mere condition of their existence, subject to an obligation to obey them. They originate, as to their existence and obligation, in the gracious scheme which God has devised and executed for the salvation of lost man; and in the provision which He, in His sovereignty and wisdom, has made for bestowing upon men individually an interest in the benefits of that salvation. But this difference does not affect the point now under consideration. The same general views which we have stated in regard to the former class of duties, apply also to this—to the effect of showing that God might possibly, and even probably, have good and sufficient reasons for imposing upon men commands which they were not able to obey; and that the imposition of the command, so far from implying necessarily that men have power to obey it, might just be intended to teach them the reverse of this. That men are not able to repent and believe by their own strength, without the special grace of God, is generally admitted, both by Papists and Arminians, who are accustomed to press this objection. If this be so, then it is important that men should be aware of it; that they may realize their own helplessness and dependence, and may thus be led to seek that grace of God of which they stand

in need; and, in accordance with a favourite saying of Augustine's, quoted with approbation by Calvin, "Jubet Deus quæ non possumus, ut noverimus quid ab ipso petere debeamus." * It is in entire accordance with the great principles which obviously regulate God's moral administration, His communication of spiritual blessings, that He should have regard to the production of this result in the commands which He imposes. And, with respect to this class of duties, there is another consideration which tends towards an explanation of the imposition of the command, in accordance with men's assumed inability to obey it,—viz., that we have good ground in Scripture to believe that it is a part of God's wise and gracious provision to make the imposition of the command, and the felt inability to comply with it, the occasion, and in some sense the means, of His communicating to men strength to enable them to comply with it; so that He may be said to issue the command to repent and believe, not because men are already and previously able to obey, but in order that, having convinced them of their inability, He may then, *in the wisest and most beneficial manner*, impart to them the grace and strength that are necessary to enable them to obey. This principle has been often illustrated, and very pertinently, by a reference to some of our Saviour's miracles,—as, for example, when He commanded a lame man to walk, which he was at the time wholly unable to do, but when, at the same time, in connection with the command, and in a sense through its *instrumentality*, He communicated a power or strength that made him able to comply with it.

On these grounds it is easy enough to dispose of the objection against the doctrine of man's inability in his natural condition, and without divine grace, to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, founded upon the fact that God commands and requires these things. These considerations, however, though quite sufficient to dispose of this objection, do not go to the root of the difficulty connected with this subject; for the great difficulty lies not in the mere fact that such commands and exhortations are addressed to men while they are unable to obey them (and this is all that we have yet examined), but in the fact that they are *responsible* for obeying, and incur guilt by disobeying, notwithstanding their inability to render, because of their inability

* Calvin. Inst., Lib. ii., c. v., sec. vii.

to will to render, obedience. This is the great difficulty, and we must now proceed to consider it; but as the objection is often put in the form of an allegation, that God would not, and could not, impose such commands unless men were able to comply with them,—it being assumed that the mere fact of the issue of the command implies that men are able to render obedience to it,—we have thought proper to advert, in the first place, to the objection in this form, and to suggest briefly the very obvious considerations by which it can be conclusively shown to be destitute of all real weight and cogency.

The great objection commonly adduced against everything like necessity or bondage, when ascribed to man or to his will, is, that this is inconsistent with man being responsible for his actions, and incurring guilt by his sins and shortcomings. That man is responsible for his actions,—that he incurs guilt, and justly subjects himself to punishment, by his transgressions of God's law,—is universally admitted, on the testimony at once of Scripture and consciousness. Of course, no doctrine is to be received as true, which *is* inconsistent with this great truth. It has been often alleged of certain doctrines, both theological and philosophical, that, if true, they would subvert men's responsibility for their actions; and on no subject, perhaps, has there been a larger amount of intricate and perplexing discussion than has been brought forward in the attempt to settle generally and abstractly what are the elements that constitute, and are necessary to, the responsibility of rational beings, and to apply the principles so settled, or supposed to be settled, to a variety of positions predicated of men, viewed either by themselves or in their relation to God, which have been affirmed or denied, respectively, to be consistent with their being responsible for their actions.

We have no great fear of men being ever led in great numbers to deny their responsibility, or practically to shake off a sense of their being responsible for their actions, because, or through means, of any speculative opinions which they may have been led to adopt. The Author of man's constitution has made such effectual provision for men feeling that they are responsible, that there is not much danger that this conviction will ever be very extensively eradicated by mere speculations. When men have been led to deny their responsibility, and seem to have escaped from any practical sense of it, this has been usually traceable, not

to speculation, but to the brutalizing influence of gross immorality —though sometimes speculation has been brought in to defend, or palliate, what it did not produce. On this ground we have no great sympathy with the extreme anxiety manifested by some to shut out, or explain away, *all* doctrines with regard to which it may be alleged with some plausibility that they are inconsistent with responsibility.

Of course, each case in which this allegation is made must be tried and decided upon its own proper merits; but a proneness to have recourse to objections against doctrines propounded, derived from this source, is, we think, more likely, upon the whole, to lead to the rejection than to the reception of what *is* true, and can be satisfactorily established by its own appropriate evidence. And when a controversy arises between men of intelligence and good character, as to whether certain opinions maintained by the one party, and denied by the other, are or are not consistent with human responsibility, we think there is a pretty strong presumption, in the mere fact that the point *is* controverted between *such* men, that the opinions in question are not inconsistent with responsibility. It may, indeed, be alleged, that the men who hold these opinions, and maintain their innocency, are better than their principles,—that they do not really believe them and follow them out to their practical consequences; but this is a very forced and improbable allegation,—and if the opinions in question have prevailed long and widely, it is altogether unwarrantable.

Upon the ground of these general and obvious considerations, we are inclined to think that Calvinists need not give themselves very much concern about the allegations which have been so often and so confidently made, that their doctrines are inconsistent with men's responsibility, and should be *chiefly* occupied with the investigation and the exposition of the direct and proper evidence by which their doctrines may be proved to be *true*. Still, objections that have a plausible appearance cannot be altogether disregarded; and it is necessary that men who would hold their views intelligently, should have some definite conception of the mode, whether it be more general or more special, in which objections should be disposed of. We shall therefore make a few observations on the great difficulty of the alleged incompatibility of the doctrine of the inability of fallen man to will anything spiritually good, with responsibility and guilt, without attempting

to give anything like a full discussion of it; and especially without pretending to investigate the general subject of the constituents, grounds, and necessary conditions of moral responsibility, —a subject which belongs rather to the province of the philosopher than the theologian.

It seems very like an irresistible dictate of common sense, not only that there are influences that might be brought to bear upon men, which would deprive them altogether, and in every sense, of their character of free agents, and that, consequently, there may be *necessities* which would be inconsistent with responsibility and guilt; but also, moreover, that men cannot be justly held guilty, and of course liable to punishment, for not doing what they are unable, *in any sense or respect*, to will or to do. And, accordingly, the defenders of the doctrine of man's inability have usually admitted that there is, and must be, some sense or respect in which man may be said to be able to will and to do what is required of him. They have then tried to show how or in what sense it is that man may be said to be able to do what is required of him; while it may also be true, in a different sense, though not inconsistent with this, that he is unable to do it; and then they have further undertaken to show, that the ability which they can concede to man, consistently with the inability which they also ascribe to him, is a sufficient ground for responsibility and guilt; or, at least,—and this is certainly all that is argumentatively incumbent upon them,—that it cannot be proved that it is not. This, I think, may be said to be a correct and compendious description of the general outline of the course of argument usually employed by the defenders of the doctrine of man's inability, in answer to the objection which we are now considering about its alleged incompatibility with responsibility. This mode of dealing with the objection is, in its general scope and character, a perfectly fair and legitimate one; and if the different positions of which it may be said to consist can be established, it is sufficient fully to dispose of it. For the whole case stands thus.

The sacred Scriptures teach, very plainly and explicitly, that fallen men in their natural condition, and before they become the subjects of God's regenerating grace, are unable to will or to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation; while they teach, also, that they incur guilt, and expose themselves to punishment, by not willing and doing what God requires of them. And

as common sense seems to dictate that men cannot incur guilt, unless they are in some sense or respect able to will and to do what is demanded of them, the very obvious difficulty on which the objection is founded at once arises. In these circumstances, —*this* being the state of the case,—these being the actual realities with which we have to deal,—the very first question that would naturally suggest itself to a man of real candour, anxious only about the discovery of truth,—about really ascertaining what it was his duty to believe upon the subject (I speak, of course, of men admitting the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures),— would be this: Is there any way in which these two doctrines can be reconciled; or in which, at least, it can be shown that they cannot be proved to be irreconcilable, or necessarily exclusive of each other? Is there any sense in which man may be said to be able to will and to do what God requires of him, which can be shown to be consistent with what Scripture seems so plainly to teach as to his inability, or which at least cannot be proved to be inconsistent with it, and which, moreover, may also be shown to be sufficient as a basis or foundation for his responsibility and guilt,—or, at least, cannot be shown to be insufficient for this conclusion? These are the questions which would naturally and at once suggest themselves to any fair and candid man in the actual circumstances of the case. And if so, then it is plain that an attempt to answer them, and to answer them in the affirmative, is entitled to a fair and impartial examination. Any attempt that may be made to answer these questions, must in fairness be carefully considered, conclusively disposed of, and proved to be unsatisfactory, before we can be warranted in rejecting the doctrine of man's inability,—which the Scripture seems so plainly to teach, —and even before any violent effort can be warrantably made,— and a very violent one is certainly required,—to explain away the natural and obvious meaning of the declarations which it makes upon this subject. I have no doubt that these questions have been answered satisfactorily, *so far as can be shown to be necessary*, by the defenders of the doctrine of man's inability to will anything spiritually good; and I think it could be shown that any errors into which they may have fallen in the discussion of this subject, or any want of success in the mode in which any of them may have conducted their argument, have usually arisen from their attempting more in the way of explanation and proof, than

the conditions of the argument, as they have now been stated, required them to undertake.

From the explanations which we have given upon this subject, it is evident that the examination of the objection is narrowed very much to this question: Is there any sense, and if so, what, in which men may be said to be able to do what is spiritually good, and with respect to which it cannot be proved, either, first, that it is inconsistent with the inability which the Scripture so plainly ascribes to him; or, secondly, that it is insufficient as a basis or foundation for responsibility and guilt? or,—what would be equally satisfactory in point of argument,—can anything answering this description be predicated of man, which, in so far as the matter of responsibility and guilt is concerned, is *equivalent* to an assertion of his responsibility? Now, it has been very common for the defenders of the Scripture doctrine upon this subject, to base their arguments, in reply to the objection about responsibility, upon the distinction between *natural and moral inability*,—alleging that man, though morally unable to do what God requires, has a natural ability to do it, and is on this ground responsible for not doing it. Natural inability is described as that which directly results from, or is immediately produced by, some physical law, or some superior controlling power, or some external violence,—any of which, it is of course admitted, deprives men of their responsibility, and exempts them from guilt; and, where none of these causes operate, men are said to possess natural ability. Moral inability is usually described as that which arises solely from want of will to do the thing required, from the opposition of will or want of inclination as the cause or source of the thing required not being done,—there not being in the way any external or natural obstacle of the kind just described. In accordance with these definitions and descriptions, men may be said to have a natural ability, or to have no natural inability, to do a thing, if their actual or *de facto* inability to do it arises solely from their want of will to do it,—so that it might be said of them, that they could do it, or were able to do it, if they willed or chose to do it. And to apply this to the subject before us: In accordance with these definitions and descriptions, it is contended that man may be said to have a natural ability, or to have no natural inability, to do what is spiritually good and acceptable to God, because there is no physical law, no superior controlling power, no external

violence, operating irrespectively of his own volition, that prevents him from doing it, or is the cause of his inability to do it, if he has any; while he may also, at the same time, be said to be morally unable to do God's will; because, while there is an inability *de facto*,—*i.e.*, according to the views of those who are conducting this argument in answer to the objection,—the cause of this lies wholly in his will—*i.e.*, in his want of will—to do it,—in his not choosing to do it. In this way there is set forth a sense in which man may be said to be able to do what is required of him, as well as a sense in which he is unable to do it,—he is naturally able, but morally unable; and if these two things cannot be shown to be inconsistent with each other, and if natural ability, or the absence of natural inability, cannot be shown to be insufficient as a ground for responsibility, then the objection is wholly removed.

Now, I have no doubt that this distinction between natural and moral inability is a real and actual, and not merely a verbal or arbitrary one, and that it has an important bearing upon the subject of man's responsibility, and on the discussions which have taken place regarding it; but I am not quite satisfied that, *taken by itself*, it goes to the root of the matter, so as to explain the whole difficulty. The distinction is undoubtedly a real one, for there is a manifest difference between the condition of a man who is subjected to external force or coaction,—whereby his volitions are prevented from taking effect, or he is compelled to do what he is decidedly averse to,—and that of a man who is left free to do whatever he wills or chooses to do. The distinction, thus real in itself or in its own nature, is realized in the actual condition of man. It is admitted by those who most strenuously maintain man's inability, that there is no physical law operating like those regulating the material world, which imposes upon men any necessity of sinning, or produces any inability to do God's will, or to turn from sin, and that there is no superior controlling power or external violence brought to bear directly either upon men's power of volition, or upon the connection between their volitions and their actions. What man ordinarily does he does voluntarily or spontaneously, in the uncontrolled exercise of his power of volition. No constraint or compulsion is exercised upon him. He does evil, because he chooses or wills to do evil; and the only direct and proximate cause of his doing evil in his natural condition—only

evil, and that continually—is, that he wills or chooses to do so. Now, it may be fairly contended that a rational and intelligent being, who, without any compulsion or coaction external to himself, spontaneously chooses or wills evil, and who *does* evil solely because he chooses or wills to do it, is responsible for the evil which he does, or, at least, cannot be easily shown to be irresponsible, *whatever else may be predicated or proved concerning him.*

This seems to be the sum and substance of all that is involved in, or that can be fairly brought out of, the common distinction between natural and moral ability or inability, as usually held by those who maintain the moral inability of man to do God's will and to turn from sin. This is the way in which they apply it, and this is the only and the whole application which they *can* make of it, with reference to this matter of responsibility. Now, this distinction, and the application thus made of it, are of great value and importance, when the subject is treated merely upon metaphysical principles, when the question is discussed as between liberty of will and what is usually called philosophical necessity; and, accordingly, the most valuable and important object accomplished in Edwards' great work on the freedom of the will, is, that he has proved that nothing more than natural ability—a power of doing as men will or choose—can be shown to be necessary to their responsibility,—that a moral as distinguished from a natural inability, attaching to them, does not exempt them from fault, inasmuch as this admits of its being said of them, that they could do what is required of them if they would. Valuable and important, however, as is the distinction thus applied in this department, I have some difficulties about receiving it as a complete solution of the objection under consideration, which has been adduced against the theological doctrine of man's inability as taught by the Reformers, and set forth in the standards of our church.

The difficulty is this, that the distinction, when applied to man's outward conduct or actions as distinguished from the inward motive or disposition, seems to apply only to man's *inability to do* God's will, and to leave *untouched* his inability to *will* to do it. It is important to show that man, in doing evil, as he does unceasingly until he is renewed by God's grace, acts spontaneously, without compulsion—does only what he wills or chooses to do; but if the doctrine which the Reformers and the compilers of our

standards deduced from Scripture,—viz., that man in his natural state is not able *to will* anything spiritually good,—be true, the whole difficulty in the matter does not seem to be reached by the establishment of *this* position. The inability is here distinctly predicated of *the will*, and this must be attended to and provided for in any principle that may be laid down in answer to the objection about its inconsistency with responsibility. If the general substance of the answer to this objection be, as we have seen it must be, that there is some sense or respect in which man may be said to have ability with reference to the matter under discussion, *as well* as a sense in which inability attaches to him in this respect, then it is manifestly not sufficient to say that he *has* ability, because he can *do* whatever he wills or chooses to do. For this statement really asserts nothing about an ability *to will;* and as, in the doctrine objected to, this inability is predicated of the will, and not of the capacity for the outward action, good or evil, so also must the corresponding ability—the assertion of which in some sense, or of something equivalent to it, is to form the *answer* to the objection—be also predicated of the will. The distinction between natural and moral inability, as sometimes explained and applied, does not seem to afford sufficient ground or basis for ascribing, in any sense or any respect, *ability to the will*, or anything equivalent to this, but only for ascribing to man an ability to *do as* he wills or chooses; and, therefore, upon the grounds which we have explained, it seems to be inadequate to meet the whole difficulty. If the inability be predicated of the will, as was done by the Reformers, and by the compilers of our standards, and if it be conceded, as we think it must be, that the obvious objection about the inconsistency of this inability with responsibility can be removed only by showing that, *in some sense or respect*, ability may be predicated of the will, *as well as* inability, then it follows that the common distinction, as sometimes explained and applied, is insufficient, because it does not go to the root of the matter, and leaves somewhat of the mystery untouched.

There is another ground for doubt as to the sufficiency of the common answer to this objection when urged as a complete solution of the difficulty,—viz., that this mode of answering the objection seems to imply that the want of will is the only or ultimate obstacle or preventative. Now, although perhaps this statement could not be shown to be erroneous, if we were discussing the

subject only on metaphysical grounds, and had to defend merely the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as commonly understood, yet it is at least very doubtful whether such a statement can be made to meet or explain the *theological* doctrine as taught by the Reformers and in the standards of our church.

According to the theological doctrine, the want of will to do good is not, strictly speaking,—as is sometimes implied in the application of the distinction between natural and moral ability, to answer the objection about responsibility,—the *only* cause why men do not do what God requires of them. For though this want of will is the sole *proximate* cause of the non-performance of spiritual duties, to the exclusion of all external controlling influences, operating irrespectively of, or apart from, man's power of volition, yet, upon scriptural and theological principles, the inability to will is itself resolved into the want of original righteousness, and the entire corruption of man's moral nature. If this theological doctrine, of man's inability to will what is spiritually good, is taught in Scripture at all, it is represented there as involved in, or deducible from, the doctrine of original sin or native moral depravity; and the state of matters which this doctrine describes is traced to the will or power of volition as a faculty of man's nature, being characterized and being determined in all its exercises by the bent or tendency of man's actual moral character, of his dispositions and inclinations. According to the doctrine of the Reformers and of our standards, "man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good;" and he had this freedom and power just because he had been created after the image of God, in righteousness and holiness—because this was the character and tendency of His moral constitution. And according to the same scheme of doctrine, to adopt again the words of our Confession, "man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation," and has lost this ability of will just because he has lost the image of God, and fallen under the reigning power of depravity, or has become, as our Confession says, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil."* If this be so, then it is not true that the *sole* or ultimate cause why men in their fallen state do not perform what is spiritually good,

* Confession, c. vi., s. iv.

is that they do not choose or will to do it, since even this want of will itself, or the inability to will, is traceable to something deeper and ulterior as its source or cause.

On these grounds I am much inclined to think that the common distinction between natural and moral ability, however true in itself, and however important in some of its bearings, does not, as sometimes applied, afford a complete explanation of the difficulty connected with the theological doctrine, that man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to spiritual good; and, upon the whole, I am disposed to adopt upon this topic the following statement of Turretine, whose discussion on this subject of free-will, constituting his tenth Locus in the end of the first volume, is deserving of careful perusal:—'Nec melius elabuntur, qui pertendunt *impotentiam* istam *moralem* esse, non *naturalem*, atque ita rem non absolute et simpliciter homini esse impossibilem, sed illam hominem posse si velit. Nam sive naturalis, sive moralis dicatur impotentia ista (de quo postea); certum est esse homini ineluctabilem, et frustra dici hominem hoc vel illud *posse si velit*, cùm constet eum *non posse velle;* non quòd destituatur potentia naturali volendi, quia sic differt abrutis; *sed quod careat dispositione ad bene volendum*, de quâ in hâc quæstione unicè agitur."*

Since, then, it would seem that this distinction of natural and moral inability cannot be so applied as to afford a full explanation of the difficulty charged against the theological doctrine of man's inability by nature and without divine grace to will anything spiritually good, the question still remains, Whether there be any other view or consideration which affords a more complete ground for predicating of man, in some sense, an ability of willing what is good, or of predicating of him something which is virtually equivalent to this, so far as the matter of responsibility is concerned, and may thus afford a fuller answer to the objection founded on the alleged inconsistency between inability and guilt? Before proceeding to consider this question, I must repeat that a survey of the discussions which have taken place regarding it suggests two very obvious reflections,—viz., first, that nothing can now be said upon this subject which has not been said in substance a thousand times before; and, secondly, that the subject is involved

* Turrettin., Locus x., Quæst. iv., sec. xix.

in difficulties which never have been fully explained, and never will be fully explained, at least until men get either a new revelation or enlarged faculties.

The subject is one in dealing with which we are entitled, as well as necessitated, to draw largely upon *general* considerations, which ought to have great weight and influence in satisfying the mind,—even though they do not bear *directly and immediately* upon the particular difficulties or objections adduced, and may be, as it were, common-places—valuable and important common-places —applicable to other subjects than this. We refer to such considerations as the unreasonableness of rejecting either of two doctrines, both of which seem to be sufficiently established by their direct and appropriate evidence,—evidence which cannot be directly assailed with success or even plausibility,—to reject either of two such doctrines merely because they appear *to us* to be inconsistent with each other, or because *we* are unable to point out in what way their consistency with each other can be demonstrated, —a position which we are not warranted to assume until we have first proved that *our* capacity of perceiving the harmony of doctrines with each other is *the* standard or measure of their intrinsic truth or falsehood. Akin to this, and embodying the very same principle, is the unwarrantableness of rejecting a matter of fact, when sufficiently established by its appropriate evidence, even though it may be in some of its aspects and bearings inexplicable, and though it may appear to be inconsistent with other facts, also established and admitted. The inability of man to will anything spiritually good, and his responsibility for not willing and doing it, may be regarded as at once doctrines and facts. They are doctrines clearly taught in Scripture; they are facts in the actual condition of man, established indeed by scriptural statements, but neither of them dependent wholly and exclusively for their evidence upon the authority of Scripture. The right and reasonable course in such a case is to receive and admit both these doctrines, or the facts which they declare, if they appear, after the most careful scrutiny of the evidence, to be sufficiently established,— even though they may continue to appear to us to be irreconcilable with each other.

We need not dwell upon these general considerations, as we have had occasion to advert to them before,—especially when we were considering the doctrine or fact of the entire corruption of

human nature in connection with the doctrine or fact of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity as the ground or cause of it. What was then said upon these general topics, and especially with respect to the extent to which it was either needful on the one hand, or practicable on the other, to explain difficulties or to solve objections, is the more pertinent to our present subject, because, as we have had occasion fully to explain, the inability to will anything spiritually good, which we have shown to be an actual feature in the condition of fallen man, and which we are now called upon to defend, as far as may be necessary and practicable, against the objections of opponents, is, and is represented by all who maintain it as being, a part or a necessary consequence of the state of sinfulness into which man fell, as implied in, or traceable to, the corruption or depravity which has overspread his moral nature. It was "by his fall into a state of sin," as our Confession of Faith says, that man lost all ability of will to anything spiritually good, and that of course he has not now any such ability of will until his will be renewed by divine grace. This being the true import and ground of the doctrine, as we maintain it,—this being the true state of the case, as we represent it,—we may expect to find that difficulties and objections, the same in substance, will be adduced against this doctrine of an inability of will as against the more general doctrine of an entire depravity of moral nature, in which it is involved, and from which it results; and that they may and should be dealt with in both cases in substantially the same way: we may expect to find that the extent to which it is at once needful and practicable to explain the difficulties and to solve the objections, is in both cases the same. More particularly, we may expect to find here, as we found there, that there are difficulties and mysteries connected with the full exposition of the subject, which it is impossible to explain—which run up into questions that lie beyond the cognisance of the human faculties—that run up indeed into the one grand difficulty of the existence and prevalence of moral evil under the government of God. We may expect to find that the discussions connected with these objections turn very much upon questions as to the particular place which the really insoluble difficulty is to occupy, and the precise form and aspect in which it is to be represented; and that little or nothing more can be done in the way of dealing with objections than throwing the difficulty

further back,—resolving it into some more general principle, and thus bringing it perhaps more into the general line of the analogy of views which we cannot but admit—of considerations which we are somewhat prepared to embrace.

Keeping these general considerations in view, and allowing them their due weight, we would return to the more particular examination of the objection about the incompatibility of inability with responsibility. Now, upon the grounds which have been already indicated, we are satisfied that the principle which contributes more fully than any other to furnish an answer to the objection,—an explanation of the difficulty,—is just the scriptural doctrine which leads us to regard man in his whole history, fallen and unfallen, or the whole human race collectively in their relation to God, *as virtually one and indivisible*, so far as regards their legal standing and responsibilities,—to contemplate the whole history of the human race as virtually the history of one and the same man, or, what is substantially and practically the same thing, to regard the inability of will to anything spiritually good—which can be proved to attach to man *de facto*—as a penal infliction,—a punishment justly imposed upon account of previous guilt—the guilt, of course, of Adam's first sin imputed to his posterity. We had formerly occasion to explain, in considering the subject of original sin, that there is no great difficulty in understanding that, by Adam's personal, voluntary act of sin, his own moral nature might become thoroughly ungodly and corrupt, in the way of natural consequence or of penal infliction, or of both; and that, of course, in this way, and through this medium, he might lose or forfeit all the ability of will he once possessed to anything spiritually good, and become subject to an inability of will that could be removed only by supernatural divine grace. And if the guilt of his first sin was imputed to his posterity, then this might, nay should, carry with it in their case all its proper penal consequences, including depravity of will, and the inability which results from it; and there is *thus* furnished, *pro tanto*, an explanation or *rationale*, *in the sense and with the limitations already stated*, of the inability of will to anything spiritually good attaching to men in their natural condition. The doctrine of our Confession is, that man,—not *men*, observe, but *man*, as represented by Adam under the first covenant,—lost this ability of will by his fall into a state of sin; and if the history of the human race in its different stages or periods,

considered in relation to God, is thus viewed in its legal aspects and obligations as virtually the history of one man, placed in different circumstances, then the special and peculiar difficulty supposed to be involved in the doctrine of man's actual inability, in his existing condition, to do what God requires of him, is so far removed,—that is, it is resolved into the one great difficulty of the fall of man or of the human race; and that, again, is resolvable, so far as the ground of difficulties and objections is concerned, into the introduction and continued prevalence of moral evil,—a difficulty which attaches equally in substance, though it may assume a variety of forms and aspects, to every system which admits the existence and moral government of God.

We formerly had occasion to explain, that the doctrine commonly held by Calvinists with respect to the fall of man, and the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, may be reasonably enough regarded as involving this idea, that the trial of Adam was virtually and legally the trial of the human race; that God, in His sovereignty and wisdom, resolved to subject to trial or moral probation, and did try, a creature constituted in a certain manner, endowed with certain qualities and capacities, possessed of full power to stand the trial successfully, and placed in the most favourable circumstances for exercising this power aright; and that God further resolved to regard this trial of one specimen of such a creature as virtually and legally the trial of all the creatures of the same class, so that God might at once treat them, or resolve on treating them, so far as regards their legal obligations, as if they had all failed in the trial, and had thereby justly subjected themselves to the penal consequences of transgression. *If the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity be true, it would seem as if it must involve some such idea as this;* and *then* this idea applied to our actual condition does tend to throw some light upon it,—to break the force of some of the objections commonly adduced against it, especially those based upon its alleged injustice in subjecting men to penal inflictions on account of a sin which they did not commit. It affords materials which obviously enough admit of being applied in the way of showing that it cannot be proved that there would be any ground for alleging that God would do them any real injustice in treating them, so far as its penal consequences are concerned, as if they had committed Adam's sin,—that is, as if they had been tried

themselves, and had failed in the trial; and that they could not, if so treated, make out any substantial ground for complaint.

We must further observe, as bearing upon this subject, that orthodox divines have generally taught, as a principle sanctioned by Scripture, that sin may be in some sense the punishment of sin. Orthodox divines have usually held this principle, and have, moreover, commonly admitted that it enters as one element into the full exposition of what they believe to be the doctrine of Scripture concerning the fall; and, accordingly, this principle is explained, proved, and defended from objections, in Turretine.*

I have thus given a brief summary of what is implied in, or results from, our general doctrine with respect to the fall of man or of the human race, and its bearing upon his character and condition; because it is upon this doctrine *as a whole*, that the fullest answer to the objection about responsibility, in so far as it can be shown to be necessary to answer it, is based: and nothing can be more reasonable than this, that when we are called upon to explain or defend anything which we have asserted of fallen man, we must be permitted to introduce and apply the *whole* of the doctrine which we regard Scripture as teaching upon the subject; and to insist that our whole doctrine shall be fairly looked at and examined in its different parts and in its various relations.

Now, to apply these views to the matter in hand, let us consider how they bear upon the alleged inconsistency of inability with responsibility and guilt. There is manifestly no inconsistency between saying that man before his fall had freedom and power to do that which is good, and that he has no such freedom and power now, having wholly lost it by his fall into a state of sin. And, with respect to the difficulty about responsibility, the substance of our position in answer to the objection,—a position based on, and deduced from, those general views of which we have just given a brief summary,—is this: That man is responsible for not willing and doing good, *notwithstanding* his actual inability to will and to do good, *because* he is answerable *for* that inability itself, having, as legally responsible for Adam's sin, inherited the inability, as part of the forfeiture penally due to that first transgression. If the history of the human race is to be regarded, in so far as concerns its legal relation to God, as being

* Turrettin., Locus ix., Quæst. xv.

virtually the history of one man in different circumstances,—in other words, if the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed is one of the constituent elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell,—then this position, which we have just enunciated, is *both true and relevant.* Its truth,—that is, *ex hypothesi*, upon the assumption of the truth of our fundamental doctrines in regard to the fall of man,—I need not further illustrate ; and its relevancy to the matter in hand, as an answer to the objection we are considering, lies in this, that though it does not furnish us with a ground for saying, literally and precisely, of man as he now is, that there is a sense in which we can assert that he *has* ability of will to what is spiritually good, it at least affords us a ground for saying *what is equivalent to this*,—what is substantially the same thing, so far as responsibility and guilt are concerned,—namely, that he, that is, man, or the human race, as represented in Adam, *had* ability to will and to do what is good, and lost it by his sin ; and that, *therefore*, he is responsible for the want of it,—as much responsible, so far as regards legal obligations, for all that results from inability, as if he still had the ability in which he was originally created, and which he has righteously forfeited. It is in full accordance with the dictates of right reason and the ordinary sentiments and feelings of mankind, that an ability once possessed, and thereafter righteously forfeited or justly taken away, leaves a man in the very same condition, so far as responsibility and guilt are concerned, as a present or existing ability. And this generally admitted principle, viewed in connection with our fundamental doctrines upon the subject, is legitimately available for showing that the objection cannot be established.

I am not satisfied that there is any sense in which it can be *literally* and *precisely* said with truth, that man now has an ability of will to what is spiritually good,—except the statement be referred merely to the general structure and framework of man's mental constitution and faculties as a rational being, having the power of volition, which remained unaffected by the fall ; and this, we have shown, does not furnish any complete explanation of the difficulty now under consideration. I am not persuaded that any solution meets the difficulty of asserting that man is responsible for his sins and shortcomings, *notwithstanding* his inability to will and to do what is good, except by showing that he is responsible *for* his inability. It is true, in-

deed, that this inability is involved in, or produced by, the corruption or depravity of nature which attaches to fallen man, and should therefore be admitted as a fact, a real feature of man's actual condition, if supported by satisfactory evidence, even though it could not be explained. But I know of no principle or process by which it can be so fully and completely shown that man is responsible for it, as by regarding it as a penal infliction—a part of the punishment justly imposed on account of previous guilt. This principle does go some length towards explaining the difficulty; for it shows satisfactorily that there is no peculiar difficulty attaching to this subject of inability, as distinguished from that general corruption or depravity characterizing all men, of which it is a component part, or a necessary consequence. There is no reason, then, why we should hesitate about receiving the Scripture doctrine, that man in his fallen state has no ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, and that he is unable, by his own strength, to convert himself or to prepare himself thereunto, on account of its supposed inconsistency with his being responsible for not doing what the divine law requires; for not only have we sufficient direct evidence to establish its truth,—such evidence as would warrant us in at once putting aside all objections that have been adduced against it as mere difficulties, even though no explanation could be given of them,—but, moreover, when we take into view the whole doctrine which Scripture teaches in connection with this subject, we get materials which go some length, at least, in explaining how it is that man is responsible *for* this inability, *and is therefore, a fortiori, responsible notwithstanding it;* while, at the same time, we must admit that this profound and mysterious subject is still left involved in such darkness and difficulty, as to impress upon us the duty of carefully abstaining from presumptuous reasonings and speculations of our own, and of humbly and implicitly receiving whatever God may have been pleased to reveal to us regarding it.

I would further notice how fully this discussion confirms and illustrates the truth of observations which I had formerly occasion to make: first, about the importance of rightly understanding the whole scriptural doctrine concerning man's fall and its consequences, and of having clear and distinct ideas, so far as Scripture affords us materials, of the constituents of the sinfulness of the state into which he fell; secondly, about the doctrine of the impu-

tation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, tending to throw *some* light upon this profound and mysterious subject, instead of involving it, as seems to be often supposed, in greater darkness and difficulty; and, thirdly, about the necessity of our having constant regard, in all our investigations into these topics, at once to the virtual *identity* with respect to judicial standing and legal obligation, and the vast *difference*, with respect to actual character and condition, between man fallen and man unfallen. There is but one view of the general condition of the human race that at all corresponds, either with the specific statements of Scripture, or with the phenomena which the world in all ages and countries has presented to our contemplation, regarded in connection with the more general aspects of God's character and government, which the Scripture unfolds to us; and that is the view which represents the whole human race as lying under a sentence of condemnation because of sin,—the execution of that sentence being suspended, and many tokens of forbearance and kindness being in the meanwhile vouchsafed to the whole race; while, at the same time, a great and glorious provision has been introduced, and is in operation, fitted and intended to secure the eternal salvation of a portion of the inhabitants of this lost world, who will at last form an innumerable company. This is the view given us in Scripture of the state of the human race: it is confirmed by a survey of the actual realities of man's condition; it throws some light upon phenomena or facts which would otherwise be *wholly* inexplicable; and, while neither Scripture nor reason affords adequate materials for explaining fully this awful and mysterious reality, we may at least confidently assert, that no additional darkness or difficulty is introduced into it by the doctrine which Scripture *does* teach concerning it,—namely, that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; that by one offence judgment came upon all men to condemnation.

Sec. IV.—*The Will in Regeneration.*

The Council of Trent,—being a good deal tied up, according to the principles which they professed to follow as to the rule of faith, by the ancient decisions of the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, in opposition to the Pelagians, and by some differences

of opinion among themselves,—could not well embody in their decisions so much of unsound doctrine as there is good reason to believe would have been agreeable to the great majority of them, or bring out so fully and palpably as they would have wished, their opposition to the scriptural doctrines of the Reformers. At the same time, it was absolutely necessary, for the maintenance of many of the tenets and practices which constituted the foundation and the main substance of Popery, that the doctrines of grace should be corrupted,—that the salvation of sinners should not be represented, as it was by the Reformers, as being wholly the gift and the work of God, but as being also, in some measure, effected by men themselves, through their own exertions and their own merits. We have already fully explained to what extent this policy was pursued in their decree upon original sin, and how far it was restrained and modified in its development by the difficulties of their situation. In the decree on original sin there is not a great deal that is positively erroneous, though much that is vague and defective. But when, in the sixth session, they proceeded to the great doctrine of justification, they then made the fullest and widest application of all that was erroneous and defective in their decree upon original sin, by explicitly denying that all the actions of unrenewed men are wholly sinful,—that sinful imperfection attaches to all the actions even of renewed men,—and that man, by his fall, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation. This denial, however, of the great Protestant doctrine of the utter bondage or servitude of the will of unrenewed men to sin,—of their inability to will anything spiritually good,—was not the only application they made of their erroneous and defective views about the corruption and depravity of human nature, in their bearing upon the natural powers of men with reference to their own salvation. They have further deduced from their doctrine,—that the free-will of fallen men, even in reference to spiritual good accompanying salvation, is only weakened or enfeebled, but not lost or extinguished,—the position that man's free-will co-operates with divine grace in the process of his regeneration, and this in a sense which the Reformers and orthodox Protestant churches have regarded as inconsistent with scriptural views of man's natural capacities and of the gospel method of salvation.

Their doctrine upon the *co-operation of the free-will of man*

with the grace of God in the work of regeneration, is set forth also, like the Romish errors we have already been considering in the preliminary part of the decree of the sixth session; being intended, like them, to pave the way for their grand and fundamental heresy on the subject of justification. It is this:* "If any one shall say that the free-will of man, moved and excited by God, does not co-opérate by assenting or yielding to God, exciting and calling him, in order that he may predispose and prepare himself to receive the grace of justification, or that he cannot refuse his assent, if he chooses, but that he acts altogether like some inanimate thing, and is merely passive,—let him be anathema." Now, here it is asserted, by plain implication, not only that there is free-will, or an ability of will to what is good, in operation before regeneration, but that man, in the exercise of this free-will to good, co-operates with the grace of God in the preliminary movements that precede and prepare for regeneration; and it was, of course, mainly as a foundation for this doctrine of the co-operation of the free-will of man with the grace of God in preparing for, and producing regeneration, that the freedom of the will of fallen man to good was asserted. In this way, the work of regeneration is manifestly assigned, partly to the operation of God's grace, and partly to the exercise of the free-will of man,—a power possessed by man in his natural condition, though not made really and effectively operative for his regeneration, until, as the council says in another part of their decree,† it be "excited and assisted" by divine grace. If fallen man hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation,—which we have shown to be the doctrine of Scripture,—there can, of course, be *no such* co-operation as this—no such partition of work between God and man, either in preparing for, or in effecting, man's regeneration, *because* there is nothing in man, in his natural condition, on which such a co-operation can be based, or from which it can spring. There would, therefore, be no great occasion for dwelling further on this subject, were it not that it is intimately connected with a fuller exposition of the doctrine of the Reformers and of the Reformed confessions with respect to the *passivity* which they ascribed to man in the process of regeneration,—the renovation of the will which they held to

* Sess. vi., Can. iv. † Cap. vi.

be indispensable before men could will anything spiritually good, —and the freedom of will which they undoubtedly ascribed to men *after* they were regenerated; and to these topics we would now very briefly direct attention.

The Reformers generally maintained that man was passive in the work of regeneration; and they held this position to be necessarily implied in the doctrines of the entire corruption and depravity of man's moral nature, and of his inability to will anything spiritually good, and also to have its own appropriate and specific scriptural evidence in the representation given us in the word of God of the origin and nature of the great change which is effected upon men by the operation of the divine Spirit. But as the subject is rather an intricate one, and as the doctrine of the Reformers, which is also the doctrine of our standards upon this subject of passivity as opposed to co-operation, is liable to be misunderstood and misrepresented, it may be proper to give some explanation of the sense in which, and the limitations with which, they maintained it.

The Reformers did not, as the Council of Trent represents them, describe man as acting in this matter the part merely of an inanimate object, such as a stock or a stone, though some incautious expressions of Luther's may have afforded a plausible pretence for the accusation. Calvin, adverting to the unfair use that had been made by the Romanists of some of Luther's expressions upon this subject, asserts that the whole substance of the doctrine that had been taught by Luther upon this subject, was held and defended by all the Reformers: "Quod summum est in hac quæstione, et cujus gratia reliqua omnia dicuntur, quemadmodum initio propositum fuit a Luthero et aliis, ita hodie defendimus, ac ne in illis quidem, quæ dixi ad fidem non adeo necessaria esse, aliud interest, nisi quòd forma loquendi sic fuit mitigata, ne quid offensionis hâberet." * Now, the Reformers, as I formerly showed, held that man retained, after his fall, that natural liberty with which, according to our Confession, God hath endowed the will of man, so that he never could become like a stock, or a stone, or an irrational animal, but retained his natural power of volition along with all that rationality implies. The passivity which the Reformers ascribed to man in the process of

* Calvin. De Libero Arbitrio (Tractatus, ed. 1576), p. 199.

regeneration, implied chiefly these two things,—first, that God's grace must *begin* the work without any aid or co-operation, *in the first instance*, from man himself, there being nothing in man, in his natural state, since he has no ability of will to anything spiritually good, from which such aid or co-operation can proceed; and, secondly, that God's grace must by *itself* effect some change on man, before man himself can *do* anything, or exercise any activity in the matter, by willing or doing anything spiritually good; and all this, surely, is very plainly implied in the scriptural doctrines of man's depravity and inability of will, and in the scriptural representations of the origin and nature of regeneration.

Again, the Reformers did not teach that man was altogether passive, or the mere inactive subject of the operation of divine grace, or of the agency of the Holy Ghost, in the whole of the process that might be comprehended under the name of regeneration, taken in its wider sense.* Regeneration may be taken either in a more limited sense,—as including only the first implantation of spiritual life, by which a man, dead in sins and trespasses, is quickened or made alive, so that he is no longer dead; or it may be taken in a wider sense, as comprehending the whole of the process by which he is renewed, or made over again, in the whole man, after the image of God,—as including the production of saving faith and union to Christ, or very much what is described in our standards under the name of effectual calling. Now, it was only of regeneration, as understood in the first or more limited of these senses, that the Reformers maintained that man in the process was wholly passive, and not active; for they did not dispute that, before the process in the second and more enlarged sense was completed, man was spiritually alive and spiritually active, and continued so ever after during the whole process of his sanctification. This is what is taught in the standards of our church, when it is said, in the Confession of Faith,† that in the work of effectual calling man "is altogether passive, *until*, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it;" and in the Larger Catechism,‡ that God in effectual

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* Witsius, De Œcon. Fœd., Lib. iii., c. vi., sec. xii.; Mastricht, Theologia, Lib. vi., c. iii., pp. 659–663.

† C. x., sec. 2.

‡ Q. 67.

calling renews and powerfully determines men's wills, "so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer His call."

Neither did the Reformers teach, as they are often represented by Papists, that God regenerates or converts men against their will; for their doctrine upon this point,—and it is in entire accordance with all they teach upon the whole subject,—is, that He makes them willing by renewing their wills, or by making their wills good in place of bad. These were the doctrines which were taught by the Reformers upon this point, and which were condemned, and intended to be condemned, by the Council of Trent, in the canon which we have quoted.

Some of the very strong and incautious expressions which were used by Luther in setting forth the passivity of man in the work of regeneration,—and which Calvin apologizes for in the context of the passage above quoted from him,—seem to have occasioned some reaction of sentiment in the Lutheran church upon this subject, and to have thus produced, though not till after Luther's death, what was called the Synergistic Controversy, or the dispute about the *συνεργεια*, or co-operation of man with God in this matter. Melancthon seems to have given some countenance to the error of the Synergists, as they were called, by using, on a variety of occasions,—though not, it would appear, till after Luther's death,—expressions which seemed, in all fairness, to imply that, when divine grace *began* to operate upon men, with a view to their regeneration or conversion, it *found* in them at the very first, and antecedently to any real change actually effected upon them, not merely rationality and the natural power of volition, which rendered them the fit subjects, the suitable recipients, of a supernatural spiritual influence, but such a natural capacity of willing what was spiritually good, as rendered them capable at once of actively co-operating or concurring even with the first movements of the divine Spirit. This controversy continued to agitate the Lutheran church for many years, both before and after the death of Melancthon,—Strigelius being the chief defender of the doctrine of co-operation, and Flaccus Illyricus its principal opponent. It was at length settled, like many of their other controversial differences, by the "Formula Concordiæ," finally adopted and promulgated in 1580, which, though it explicitly condemned what were understood to be the

views of the defenders of the doctrine of co-operation, was subscribed by Strigelius himself.* As the "Formula Concordiæ" contains a very distinct condemnation of the doctrine of co-operation even in its mildest and most modified form, as asserted by some of the followers of Melancthon,—and as it contains, indeed, a full exposition of the whole subject, carefully prepared after the whole matter had been subjected to a long and searching controversy,—it is fitted to throw considerable light upon the difficulties, intricacies, and ambiguities of the question, and it may conduce to the explanation of the subject to quote an extract from it. It condemns this doctrine,† "(cum docetur), licet homo non renatus, ratione liberi arbitrii, ante sui regenerationem infirmior quidem sit, quam ut conversionis suæ initium facere, atque propriis viribus sese ad Deum convertere, et legi Dei toto corde parere valeat: tamen, si Spiritus Sanctus prædicatione verbi initium fecerit, suamque gratiam in verbo homini obtulerit, tum hominis voluntatem, propriis et naturalibus suis viribus quodammodo aliquid, licet id modiculum, infirmum et languidum admodum sit, conversionem adjuvare, atque cooperari, et se ipsam ad gratiam applicare" et "præparare."

I may mention here by the way, that Bossuet, in the Eighth Book of his History of the Variations, has, by a bold stroke of his usual unscrupulous policy, attempted to convict even the Formula Concordiæ of the heresy of semi-Pelagianism on the subject of co-operation, though, beyond all question, it contains nothing which makes so near an approach to Pelagianism as the decrees of the Council of Trent.‡ Bossuet, indeed, shows satisfactorily that some of the Lutheran statements connected with this point are not very clear and consistent; but the only fair inference deducible from any inconsistencies which he has been able to produce, is one which might equally be illustrated by an examination of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and of the symbolical books of churches that have been far sounder in their doctrinal views than the Church of Rome,—namely, that it is not possible for any man, or body of men, to be thoroughly and consistently anti-Pelagian, even on the subjects of the depravity and impotency of human nature, and regeneration by the power of

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* Weismanni Hist. Ecclesiast., Pars i., pp. 1536, etc.

† Formula Concordiæ, de Libero Arbitrio.

‡ Moehler's Symbolism, i., p. 128.

the Holy Spirit, though they may intend to be so, and think that they are so, unless they admit what are commonly reckoned the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism.

The great practical conclusion which the Reformers deduced from the doctrine they maintained as to the passivity of man in the work of regeneration,—and, indeed, the substance of what they held to be implied in this doctrine,—was the necessity of a renovation of man's will by the sole power of God, as antecedently indispensable to his exerting any real activity in willing or doing anything spiritually good. If man has not by nature any ability of will for spiritual good, he must receive it wholly from grace; if he has no power of will in himself, he must receive it from God; if it does not exist in him, it must be put into him by God's power. That all this is necessary, is plainly implied in the scriptural descriptions of man's natural condition; that all this is done in the process of regeneration, is plainly implied in those scriptural descriptions which represent it as a quickening or vivifying of those who were dead in sins and trespasses,—as giving men new hearts,—as taking away their stony hearts, and giving them hearts of flesh. The Reformers, accordingly, were accustomed to describe the process as involving a renovation of men's wills,—a changing them from evil to good; not, of course, the creating and bestowing of a new and different power of volition, but giving it different capacities, and bringing it under wholly different influences. It is this renovation of the will that stands out as *that* in the whole process of regeneration,—taking the word in its most extensive sense, that of effectual calling,—which most imperatively demands the immediate and exclusive agency of divine power,—the special operation of the Holy Ghost,—for its accomplishment.

What are usually regarded, on scriptural grounds, as constituting the leading steps in the work of effectual calling, are the conviction of sin, the illumination of the understanding, and the embracing of Christ. These may all seem to be natural and easy processes, which *might* be supposed, perhaps, to result, without any supernatural divine agency, from the influence of the views opened up to us in Scripture, or at least without anything more than the gracious power of God exciting and assisting us, as the Council of Trent says,—exciting us to attend to what is said in Scripture, and assisting our own efforts to understand and realize it,—exciting us to exercise our natural power of attention, and assisting us in

the exercise of our natural power of acquiring knowledge, and of our natural capacity of receiving impressions from what we know. Were nothing more necessary, the exciting and assisting power of divine grace might appear to be plausibly represented as sufficient. But the grand obstacle which man's natural character and condition present to his reception of the truth and his embracing Christ, is the entire aversion of his will to anything spiritually good, his utter inability to will anything that is pleasing to God, his entire bondage or servitude to sin. Hence the necessity, not only of the conviction of sin and the illumination of the understanding, but also of the renovation of the will, in order to men's embracing Christ.* The aversion or enmity of his natural mind to God and divine things must be taken away,—a new and different disposition, taste, or tendency from anything that exists in unrenewed men, or that can be elicited from the ordinary operation of their natural principles, must be communicated to them; and this can proceed only from the immediate operation of divine grace,—the special agency of the Holy Spirit. The process needful for removing this aversion, and communicating a different and opposite tendency, must be something very different from merely exciting, stirring up what is lazy or languid, and assisting what is weak or feeble; and yet this is all which the doctrine of the Council of Trent admits of. Orthodox Protestants have been accustomed to contrast the strong and energetic language of Scripture upon this subject with the feeble and mincing phraseology of the Romish council, and to ask whether exciting and assisting the will, which was in itself weak and feeble, was anything *like* creating a new heart; and whether God's *working* in us to will as well as to do, resembled our willing what was good by our own powers, with some assistance furnished to us by God.† The contrast is quite sufficient to show that the Church of Rome ascribes to man what man has not, and cannot effect, and takes from God what He claims to Himself, and what His almighty power alone can accomplish.

Much, indeed, is said even by the Council of Trent about the necessity of divine grace, and about the impossibility of men being converted or regenerated if left wholly to their own unaided resources and exertions; and so far the Church of Rome has not

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* Mastricht, Theol., Lib. vi., cap. iii., p. 666.

† Calvin. Antid. (Tractat., p. 387, ed. 1576).

incurred the guilt of teaching open and palpable Pelagianism, as many bearing the name of Protestants have done; but, by ascribing more to man than man *can* effect, and by ascribing less to God in the process than He claims to Himself, she has sanctioned anti-scriptural error in a matter of vast importance, and error of a kind peculiarly fitted to exert an injurious influence. Men are strongly prone to magnify their own powers and capacities, to claim for themselves some influential share in anything that affects their character and their happiness. General declarations of the necessity of divine grace to aid or assist them in the process, will be but feeble barriers against the pride, and presumption, and self-confidence of the human heart. Men may admit the truth of these declarations; but if they are taught, also, as the Church of Rome teaches, that they have in themselves some natural power or freedom of will, by which they can co-operate with God's grace from the very time when it is *first* exerted upon them, or, as Moehler expresses it,* that "by the mutual interworking of the Holy Spirit and of the creature freely co-operating, justification really commences," they will be very apt to leave the grace of God out of view, and practically to rely upon themselves. Experience abundantly proves, that it is of the last importance that men's views upon all these subjects should be both correct and definite, and that any error or deviation from Scripture is not only wrong in itself, and directly injurious in its influence so far as it reaches, but tends, even beyond its own proper sphere, to introduce indefinite and confused impressions.

Nothing is more common than to hear men admit the necessity of divine grace in the work of regeneration, who make it manifest that they attach no definite practical idea to the admission; and the cause is to be found not so much in this, that they do not in some sense believe what they admit, but that they also hold some defective and erroneous views upon the subject,—some error mingled with the truth regarding it,—which introduces indefiniteness and confusion into all their impressions concerning it. Thus it is that the admission by Papists of the necessity of divine grace in the work of regeneration, so long as they also hold that man has some natural power or freedom to will what is spiritually good, and that, in the exercise of this natural

* Moehler, Symbolism, vol. i., p. 117.

power of free-will, he actively co-operates with God in the production of the whole process, tends only to produce confusion of view, and indefiniteness of impression, in regard to the whole matter. The doctrine of Scripture, on the contrary, is fitted to produce distinct and definite impressions upon this subject, by denying to man any natural ability to will anything spiritually good, and by asserting the necessity of the renovation of the will by the sole operation of God's gracious power before any spiritual activity can be manifested—before any good volitions can be produced. Here is a clear and definite barrier interposed to men's natural tendency to magnify their own natural powers. If men admit this, their impressions of their own utter helplessness and entire dependence upon divine grace must be much more precise and definite than they can be upon any other theory; while the tendency of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, or of any similar doctrine, which leaves no one part of the process of regeneration to divine grace *alone*, but represents man as co-operating more or less in the exercise of his natural power of free-will *in the whole of the process*, is to lead men to rely upon themselves, and to claim to themselves some share in everything that contributes to promote their own happiness and welfare.

We are not, however, considering at present the general subject of regeneration, conversion, or effectual calling, but only that of free-will in connection with it; and we must proceed to notice very briefly, in conclusion, the freedom ascribed by the Reformers to the will of men *after* they are regenerated. And here, again, we may take the statement of what was generally taught by the Reformers from our own Confession of Faith, which says,* "When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, He freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by His grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good." Here, again, is freedom of will ascribed to man in his regenerate state,—that is, *an ability to will good as well as to will evil*,—whereas, formerly, he had power or freedom only to will evil. In the regeneration of his nature, the reigning power of depravity is subdued, and all the effects which it produced are more or less fully taken away. One of the principal of these effects was the utter bondage or servitude of the will to sin, be-

* C. ix., sec. 4.

cause of the ungodly and depraved tendency of the whole moral nature to what was displeasing and offensive to God. This ungodly and depraved tendency is now in conversion to a large extent removed, and an opposite tendency is implanted. Thus the will is set free, or emancipated, from the bondage under which it was held. It is no longer subjected to a necessity, arising from the general character and tendency of man's moral nature, to will only what is evil, but is able also freely to will what is good; and it does freely will what is good, though, from the remaining corruption and depravity of man's nature, it still wills also what is evil. It is not emancipated from the influence of God's decrees, fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass; it is not placed beyond the control of His providence, whereby, in the execution of His decrees, He ever rules and governs all His creatures and all their actions. It is not set free from the operation of those general laws which God has impressed upon man's mental constitution for directing the exercise of his faculties and regulating his mental processes; but it is set free from the *dominion* of sin, exempted from the necessity of willing only what is evil, and made equally able freely to will what is good. It has recovered, to a large extent, the only liberty it ever lost, and is determined and characterized *now*, as it had been in all the previous stages of man's history, both before and after his fall, by man's general moral character and tendencies,—free to good,—when man had the image of God and original righteousness, but yet mutable, so that it could will evil; in bondage,—when man was the slave of sin, so that it could will only evil, and not good; emancipated,—when man was regenerated, so that it could freely will good as well as evil, though still bearing many traces of its former bondage and of its injurious effects; and, finally, to adopt again the language of our Confession of Faith, in closing the admirable chapter on this subject, to be made "perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only."*

It is scarcely necessary to observe that the views held by the Reformers and by the compilers of the standards of our church, with regard to the liberation of the will in regeneration from entire bondage, or servitude to sin, and the power or freedom which thereafter it enjoys and exercises to will good as well as

* Confession, c. ix., sec. 5.

evil, decidedly confirm the statements we formerly made as to the general import and relations of their whole doctrine on the freedom or liberty of the will of man, and the servitude or necessity that might be ascribed to it. But as we have taken the liberty of pointing out the defectiveness of the discussion of this subject by some very eminent orthodox theologians, as if it were entirely comprehended in the discussion of the question as to the truth or falsehood of the doctrine of philosophical necessity, it may be proper now to observe that there is nothing in our standards inconsistent with the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as it is commonly understood. From the explanations which have been given, it is plain enough, that while, on the one hand, neither the doctrine of the entire servitude or bondage of the will of fallen and unrenewed man to sin because of depravity, nor any other doctrine of Calvinism, necessarily *requires* the adoption and maintenance of the doctrine of philosophical necessity; so, on the other hand, neither the general liberty which our Confession ascribes to the will of man absolutely and in all circumstances, nor the special liberty which it ascribes to the will of man unfallen and of man regenerated, *excludes*, or is inconsistent with, that doctrine. Men who believe the whole Calvinistic system of theology, as set forth in the standards of our church, are, I think, fully warranted, in consistency with their theological convictions, to treat what is commonly called philosophical necessity purely as a question in philosophy; and to admit or reject it according to the view they may have formed of the psychological and metaphysical grounds on which it has been advocated and opposed.*

Sec. V.—*God's Providence, and Man's Sin.*

There is one other topic,—and only one,—of those that were subjects of controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, and that are adverted to in the preliminary part of the decree of the sixth session of the Council of Trent, to which I mean to advert,—namely, what is usually called the cause of sin, and especially the providence of God in its relation to the sinful actions of men. This is the most difficult and perplexing subject that ever has been, or perhaps ever can be, investigated

* The Reformers and Theology of the Reformation, pp. 482, etc.—Edrs.

by the mind of man; and it has been the cause or the occasion of a great deal of very unwarranted and presumptuous speculation. Indeed, it may be said to be the one grand difficulty into which all the leading difficulties involved in our speculations upon religious subjects may be shown to resolve themselves. The difficulty is a very obvious one,—so obvious, that it must occur to every one who has ever reflected upon the subject. It is, indeed, virtually the question of the origin of moral evil,—the question why moral evil, with all its fearful and *permanent* consequences, was permitted under the government of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness, and goodness; and why it is to continue without end to exert its ruinous influence upon the character and destiny of God's creatures,—an inquiry which, from the very nature of the case, lies plainly beyond the range of men's faculties, and about which we can know nothing certain or satisfactory, except what God Himself may have been pleased to reveal to us regarding it.

The general question, indeed, of the origin and prevalence of moral evil has usually been admitted by men to lie beyond the range of the human faculties; but there are other questions of a more limited description, connected with this subject, on which many have thought themselves more at liberty to indulge in speculation, though, in truth, the difficulties that attach to them are as great—and, indeed, the very same—as those which beset the general question. The question which was discussed between the Reformers and the Church of Rome upon this topic, was chiefly this: What is the nature of the agency which God exerts in regard to the sinful actions of His responsible creatures; and, more especially, whether the agency which the Reformers usually ascribed to Him in this matter afforded ground for the allegation that they made Him the author of sin? The general subject of the origin of moral evil was not, to any considerable extent, formally discussed between them. Neither can it be said that the subject of God's predestination, or of His fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass, forms one of the proper subjects of controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome; for although Romish writers in the sixteenth century, and ever since, have most commonly opposed the doctrine of the Reformed churches upon this subject, and denied God's fore-ordination of all events, yet the Church of Rome can scarcely be said to be committed on either side of this question. The subject, indeed, was discussed in the

Council of Trent; and it is a curious and interesting fact, that the two sides of this question (for it *has* only *two* sides, though many elaborate attempts have been made to establish intermediate positions, or positions that seem to be intermediate) were defended by opposite parties in the council, and that the respective grounds on which the opposite opinions are founded were fully brought forward.*

From an unwillingness to go directly in the teeth of Augustine, and from the difference of opinion that subsisted among themselves, the council gave no decision either on the more general question of God's predestination of all events, or on the more specific question of election of men individually to everlasting life, though these subjects occupied a prominent place in the theology of the Reformers, and though an opposite view to that taught by the Reformers has usually been supported by Romish writers. The council anathematized, indeed, in the seventeenth canon of this sixth session, the doctrine that the grace of justification is enjoyed only by those who are predestinated to life, and who finally attain to it; but in this error they had some countenance from Augustine, who generally included regeneration in justification, and who held that some men who were regenerated, though none who were predestinated to life,—for he made a distinction between these two things, which are most clearly and fully identified in Scripture,—might fall away, and finally perish. They taught, also,† that believers could not, without a special revelation, attain to a certainty that they belonged to the number of the elect; but this does not necessarily imply any deliverance upon the subject of election itself. Accordingly, we find that it was not so much the decrees of God, as the execution of His decrees in providence, that formed the subject of controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists in the sixteenth century. The Reformers,—from the views they held as to the entire corruption and depravity of man, and his inability of will, in his unregenerate state, to anything spiritually good,—were naturally led to speak of, and discuss, the way and manner in which the sinful actions of men were produced or brought into existence,—in other words, *the cause of sin*. This, therefore,—namely, the cause of sin, or the investigation of the source or sources to which the sinful actions

* F. Paul, Liv. ii., sec. lxxx. † Sess. vi., c. xii.

of men are to be ascribed,—became an important topic of discussion, as intimately connected with the depravity of human nature, and the natural bondage of the will to sin.

Most of the theological works of that period have a chapter upon this subject, "De causa peccati." Calvin, in the beginning of the second book of his Institutes, after discussing the fall, the depravity of man, and the bondage of his will, has a chapter* to explain, "Quomodo operetur Deus in cordibus hominum," before he proceeds to answer the objections adduced against his doctrine, and in defence of free-will. The Romanists eagerly laid hold of the statements of the Reformers upon this subject,—upon the cause of sin, and the agency, direct or indirect, of God in regard to men's sinful actions,—and laboured to extract from them some plausible grounds for the allegation that their doctrine made God the author of sin. The Council of Trent, accordingly, in the canon† which immediately succeeds the two on free-will already discussed, anathematizes the doctrine imputed by implication to the Reformers, "that God works (operari) evil actions as well as good ones, not only permissively (non permissive solum), but also properly and *per se*, so that the treachery of Judas was His proper work no less than the calling of Paul." It is a remarkable fact, that the ground, and the only ground, they had for ascribing this offensive statement about Judas and Paul to the Reformers was, that Melancthon made a statement to that effect in the earliest edition of his Commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans;‡ while none of the other Reformers, and least of all Calvin, had ever made any statements of a similar kind. Indeed, Calvin, in his Antidote,§ expresses his disapprobation of the statement which Melancthon had made, that the treachery of Judas was the proper work of God as much as the calling of Paul. Independently, however, of such rash and offensive statements as some of those contained in the earlier writings of Melancthon, the Romanists charged the Reformers in general with so representing and describing the agency of God, in regard to the sinful actions of man, as to make Him the author of sin. And in Romish works, not only of that, but of every subsequent age, this has been one of the leading accusations brought against them.

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* C. iv.
† Session vi., can. vi.
‡ Moehler, vol. i., p. 52.
§ Calvin. Antid., in Can. vi., sess. vi.

As early as 1521, the Faculty of the Sorbonne charged Luther with Manichæism,* as Augustine had been charged on the same ground by the Pelagians; and in our own day, Moehler, who belongs to the more candid class of Romish controversialists,—though that is no great praise, and though his candour, after all, is more apparent than real,—gravely assures us that Luther's views approximated to the Gnostico-Manichæan, while Zwingle's resembled the Pantheistic.† Bellarmine has urged this charge against the Reformers,—that they make God the author of sin,—at great length, and with great earnestness, having devoted to it the whole of the second of his six books, *de Amissione gratiæ et statu peccati*, the first being occupied with an elaborate attempt to establish the proper distinction between mortal and venial sin,—a position of much more importance, both theoretically and practically, in the Popish system than it might at first sight appear to be. The Lutherans, before Bellarmine's time, had abandoned most of the doctrines of their master that afforded any very plausible ground for this charge; and Bellarmine accordingly‡ lets them off, and directs his assault against Zwingle, Calvin, and Beza. Melancthon, indeed, had gone from one extreme to another upon this subject, and, in the later editions of his Loci Communes, resolved the cause of sin into the will of man choosing sin spontaneously, which is certainly true so far as it goes, and important in its own place, but which very manifestly does not go to the root of the matter, and leaves the main difficulty wholly untouched. After the death of Melancthon, the Lutherans generally exhibited the most bitter virulence against Calvin and his followers, and usually made common cause with the Papists in representing them as making God the author of sin, as we see in the answers of Calvin and Beza to the furious assaults of Westphalus and Heshusius. It was in order to establish this charge that an eminent Lutheran divine wrote a book which he called "Calvinus Turcisans," or Calvin Turkising,—that is, teaching the doctrine of the Turks or Mahometans,—phrases often occurring in this connection in the theology of the latter part of the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth centuries. Bellar-

* Luther. Op., tom. ii., p. 454.
† Moehler's Symb., vol. i., p. 281.
‡ Bellarm. Opera, tom. iv., p. 40. Ed. 1615.

mine admits that Zwingle, Calvin, and Beza disclaimed the doctrine that God was the author of sin, and that they maintained that no such inference was deducible from anything they had ever taught; but he professes to show that their doctrines respecting the agency or providence of God, in regard to the sinful actions of men, afford satisfactory grounds for the following startling conclusions: first, that they make God the author of sin; secondly, that they represent God as truly sinning; and, thirdly, that they represent God alone, and not man at all, as the sinner in the sinful actions of men; and then he formally and elaborately proves that God is not a sinner, or the author of sin, and that, consequently, the doctrine of these Reformers upon this subject is false.

The Reformers, of course, regarded these conclusions, which the Papists and Lutherans deduced from their doctrines, as blasphemies, which they abhorred as much as their opponents, and denied that they had ever afforded any good grounds for charging these blasphemies upon them. The substance of their defence against the charge may be embodied in the following propositions: first, that they ascribed to God's providence no other part or agency in respect to the sinful actions of men than the word of God ascribed to it, and that the word of God ascribed to it something more than a mere permission; secondly, that ascribing to God something more than a mere permission with regard to the sinful actions of men, did not necessarily imply that He was the author of sin, or at all involve Him in the guilt of the sinful actions which they performed; and, thirdly, that the difficulties attaching to the exposition of this subject,—difficulties which they did not profess to be able to solve,—afforded no sufficient grounds for refusing to receive what Scripture taught regarding it, or for refusing to embody the substance of scriptural teaching upon the point, in propositions or doctrines that ought to be professed and maintained as a portion of God's revealed truth. Now, it is plain from this statement, that everything depends upon the answer to the question, What is the substance of what Scripture teaches upon the subject,—the subject being, *not* whether God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, though that is intimately connected with it, but what is the nature and extent of His agency in providence, with respect to the sinful actions which men perform; and then, thereafter,

whether this which He does in the matter,—that is, which the Scripture appears to ascribe to Him,—can be proved to involve Him in the guilt of their sins, or to exempt them from guilt?

Now, the investigation of these questions has given rise to an almost boundless extent of intricate discussion,—an almost endless number of minute and perplexing distinctions. I can only allude to the most obvious and important features of the question, without entering into any detail. It is important to notice, in the first place, that the Reformers all felt and acknowledged the difficulty of embodying, in distinct and explicit propositions, the sum and substance of what seems plainly indicated in Scripture, as to the providence or agency of God in connection with the sinful actions of men. The Scriptures very plainly teach that God is not the author of sin,—that He incurs no guilt, and commits no sin, when His intelligent and responsible creatures violate the law which He has given them. And yet they also seem so plainly to ascribe to Him an agency or efficiency, both in regard to the introduction and continuance of that general system of things, of which the sinful actions of His creatures constitute so prominent a feature,—and likewise in regard to the particular sinful actions which they perform,—that a difficulty must at once be felt by every one who attempts to embody, in distinct propositions, the sum and substance of what the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject is. It has been very common to represent *this* as the substance of what Scripture teaches upon the point,—namely, that, while God is to be regarded as the author or cause of the good actions of His creatures, He only *permits* their wicked actions, but is not in any sense the author or the cause of them; permits them,—not, of course, in the sense of not prohibiting them, for every sin is forbidden by Him, and is an act of disobedience to His revealed will,—but in the sense of not preventing them from taking place. It is, of course, true that in this sense God permits—that is, does not prevent—the sinful actions which yet He prohibits, and as undoubtedly He could prevent them, if He so willed. Even this position of His permitting them presents to us difficulties with respect to the divine procedure, and the principles by which it is regulated, which we are utterly incompetent fully to solve.

But the main question, upon the point we are now considering, is this, Does the position, that God permits the sinful actions of His creatures, exhaust the whole of what the Scripture teaches us as

to His agency in connection with them? The Church of Rome maintains that it does, for this is plainly implied in the canon formerly quoted ("permissive solum"); while the Reformers, in general, maintained that it did *not*, and held that the Scriptures ascribed to God, in regard to the sinful actions of men, something more than a mere permission, or what they were accustomed to call *nuda, otiosa, et inefficax permissio;* and it was, of course, upon this *something more*, that the charge of making God the author of sin was chiefly based. The Reformers felt the difficulty of embodying this in distinct and definite propositions, and some of them have made rash and incautious statements in attempting it. But they decidedly maintained that a *mere* permission did not fully bring out the place which the Scripture ascribes to God's agency in relation to the sinful actions of men. They usually admitted, indeed, that *permission*, if it were understood not negatively, but positively,—not as indicating that God willed nothing and did nothing in the matter, but as implying that He, by a positive act of volition, resolved that He would not interpose to prevent men from doing the sin which they wished to commit,—might be employed ordinarily, in common popular use, as a compendious and correct enough description of what God did in regard to sinful actions, especially as there was no other ready and compendious way of expressing the scriptural doctrine upon the subject, but what was liable to misconstruction, and might be fitted to produce erroneous impressions. But they held the Scripture evidence for something more than permission, even in this positive sense, to be conclusive, even while they felt and acknowledged the difficulty of embodying in distinct and definite statements, what this was. And, accordingly, Calvin, after expressing his concurrence with the canon of the Council of Trent in rejecting the position that the treachery of Judas was as much the work of God as the calling of Paul, proceeds immediately to say: "Sed permissive tantum agere Deum in malis, cui persuadeant, nisi qui totam Scripturæ doctrinam ignorat?" And after referring to some scriptural statements, and giving some quotations from Augustine, he adds: "Nihil enim hic audimus quod non iisdem prope verbis, Scriptura docet. Nam et inclinandi et vertendi, obdurandi, et agendi verba illic exprimuntur."* The Reformers,

* Calvin, Antid., in Can. vi., sess. vi.

in explaining their views upon this subject, were accustomed to say that the wicked actions of men,—that is, deeds done by them in disobedience to God's prohibition, and justly exposing them to the punishment which God had denounced against all transgressors,—were yet not done "Deo inscio," or "ignorante," without God's knowledge; or "Deo invito," against His will, or without His consent,—that is, without His having, *in some sense*, willed that they should take place; or "Deo otiose spectante,"—that is, while He looked on simply as an inactive spectator, who took no part, in any sense, in bringing them about.* And if it was true negatively, that wicked actions were not performed "Deo inscio, invito, vel otiose spectante" (and to question this, was plainly to deny that infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, are actually exercised at all times in the government of the world, in the administration of providence), it followed that His agency in regard to them was something more than a mere permission, a mere resolution adopted and acted upon to abstain from interfering to prevent them.

But without enlarging on the explanation of subtleties in which men have often found no end in wandering mazes lost, I would proceed at once to state in what way this very difficult and perplexing subject is explained in our Confession of Faith, in entire accordance with the doctrine of the Reformers, and in opposition to the "mere permission" of the Council of Trent. It is in this way: "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin."† In this statement there is apparent at once the deep conviction of the necessity, in order to bringing out fully the whole substance of what Scripture teaches upon the subject, to ascribe to God something more than a bare permission in re-

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* Amesii Bell. Enervat., tom. iv., pp. 33, etc. Ed. 1629.

† West. Conf., c. v., sec. iv.

gard to men's sinful actions, combined with the felt difficulty of stating, with anything like fulness, and at the same time explicitness, what this something more is; while another observation I have already made, in regard to the course pursued by the Reformers in discussing this subject, is also illustrated by the fact, that, in the next chapter of the Confession, the word "permit" is used alone as descriptive of what God did in regard to the fall of Adam, from the felt difficulty, apparently, of using any other word without needing to introduce along with it explanations and qualifications, in order to guard against error and misconstruction.

But, perhaps, it may be asked, why maintain anything doctrinally beyond permission, when it seems so difficult practically to explain and develop it with precision and safety? Now, the answer to this question is just that which was given by Calvin,—namely, that no man can believe in a mere permission, unless he be entirely ignorant of the whole doctrine of Scripture on the subject of the providence or agency of God with respect to the sinful actions of His creatures; and that, therefore, any one who professes to give the sum and substance of what Scripture teaches upon the point, must deny the doctrine of a mere permission, and assert that God, in His providence, does something more, in regard to men's sinful actions, than merely resolving to abstain from interfering to prevent what He has certainly prohibited. The evidence to this effect may be said to pervade the word of God. It is found not only in general statements as to the character and results of the providence which God is constantly exercising over all His creatures and all their actions, and more especially His agency and operations in connection with the motives and conduct of wicked men, but also in the views unfolded to us there with respect to the connection that subsists in fact between the sinful actions which men perform, and the actual accomplishment of some of God's purposes or designs of justice or of mercy; and perhaps still more directly in statements which explicitly ascribe to God a very direct connection with certain specific wicked actions, as well as to those who performed them. We may select an instance from this last department of scriptural evidence, and illustrate it by an observation or two, merely to indicate the nature of the proof.

It is said,* "The anger of the Lord was kindled against

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 1.

Israel; and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." With respect to the same transaction, it is said in First Book of Chronicles,* "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Now, this numbering of Israel was undoubtedly a sinful action of David's, done by him freely and spontaneously, without any compulsion, in the cherished indulgence of a sinful state of mind or motive. It stood, in this respect, on the same footing as any other sin which David himself, or any other man, ever committed; and it would be quite just to apply to it the Apostle James's description of the generation of sin, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust" (or evil desire), "and enticed. Then, when lust" (or evil desire) "hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." And yet this action of David, in which he was doing what God had forbidden, —transgressing God's law, and incurring guilt and the divine displeasure,—is expressly ascribed in Scripture also to God, and to Satan, in terms which, in all fair construction, imply that Satan had some share, exerted some efficiency, in bringing it about, and that God also contributed in some sense, and to some extent, to bring it about,—intending to employ it as a means of executing His just and righteous purpose or design of punishing Israel for their sins. It seems scarcely possible for any man to receive as true the statement of Scripture upon this point, without being constrained to admit that there was, and must have been, a sense in which God willed that David should number the people, and accordingly did something, or exerted some efficiency, in order to bring about this result. If, then, we would fully bring out the substance of what Scripture teaches us upon this point, we must say that God, Satan, and David, were all in some way or other concerned or combined in the production of this sinful action. We are bound, indeed, to believe,—for so the word of God teaches,— that the sinfulness of the action proceeded only from the creature, that is, from Satan and David,—Satan incurring guilt by what he did in the matter in provoking David to number Israel, but not thereby diminishing in the least David's guilt in yielding to the temptation,—and that God was not the author or approver of what was sinful in the action; but we are also bound to believe, if we submit implicitly, as we ought to do, to the fair impression

* C. xxi., v. 1.

of what Scripture says, that in regard to the action itself, which was sinful as produced or performed by Satan and David, God did more than merely permit it, or abstain, even in a positive sense, from interfering to prevent it, and that in some sense, and in some manner, He did do something in the way of its being brought about. From the difficulty, indeed, of conceiving and explaining how God could have moved David to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah," while yet the sinfulness of the action was David's only, *not* God's, we might be tempted to make a violent effort to explain away the statement, were there nothing else in Scripture to lead us to ascribe to God anything more in regard to men's sinful actions than a mere permission. But the inference to which these passages so plainly point is in entire accordance with what Scripture teaches in many places; and, indeed, with all it teaches us generally in regard to God's providence and men's sins.

There are not, indeed, *many* instances in Scripture in which, with respect to specific acts of sin, we have an explicit ascription of some share in bringing them about to God, to Satan, and to man. But we *have* other instances of a precisely similar kind, as in the robberies committed upon Job's property, and in that which was at once the most important event that ever took place, and the greatest crime that ever was committed,—the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. In these cases, the agency of God, the agency of Satan, and the agency of wicked men, are distinctly recognised and asserted; and it is, therefore, our duty to acknowledge, as a general truth, that all these parties were concerned in them, and to beware of excluding the agency of any of them, or perverting its true character, because we cannot fully conceive or explain how these parties could, in conformity with the general representations given us in Scripture of their respective characters and principles of procedure, concur in that arrangement by which the actions were brought about. It is our part to receive each portion of the information which the Scripture gives us concerning the origin of men's sinful actions, and to allow each truth regarding it to exert its own distinct and appropriate influence upon our minds, undisturbed by other truths, kept also in their proper place, and applied according to their true import and real bearing; not allowing the scriptural truth concerning God's agency and Satan's agency, with respect to sinful actions, to diminish in the least our sense of man's responsibility and guilt, and not

allowing the conviction which Scripture most fully warrants,—that God's agency is connected in some way with men's sins,—to lead us to doubt, or to fail in realizing, His immaculate holiness and irreconcilable hatred to all sin,—but employing it only to deepen our impressions of His "almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness."

We cannot dwell longer upon the scriptural proof in support of the doctrine of the Reformers and of our Confession of Faith, and in opposition to that of the Council of Trent, upon this subject. As to any further attempts to explain the kind and degree of God's agency in connection with men's sinful actions, and to unfold precisely what it is that He does in contributing, in some way and in some sense, to bring them about, the Reformers usually confined themselves to the expressions which Scripture itself employs, being aware that upon a subject so difficult and mysterious it became them to abstain from merely human speculations, and to take care to assert nothing about God's hidden and unseen agency but what He Himself had clearly warranted. But while they did not, in general, profess directly to explain, except in scriptural language, the way and manner in which God acted in respect to men's sinful actions, they were sometimes tempted to engage in very intricate discussions upon this subject, in answering the allegation of their opponents, that, by ascribing to God anything more than a mere permission in regard to men's sins, they made Him the author of sin; discussions which too often resulted in some attempt to explain more fully and minutely than Scripture affords us materials for doing, what it was that God really did in connection with men's sinful actions, and what were the principles by which His procedure in this matter was regulated, and might be accounted for.

It would have been much better if the defenders of the truth upon this subject had, after bringing out the meaning and import of Scripture, confined themselves simply to the object of proving,—what was all that, in strict argument, they were under any obligation to establish,—namely, that their opponents had not produced any solid proof, that the doctrine apparently taught in Scripture, concerning God's agency in regard to sinful actions extending to something beyond mere permission, warranted the conclusion that He was thus made the author of sin. It is easy enough to prove, by general considerations drawn from the nature of the subject,—

its mysterious and incomprehensible character, its elevation above the reach of our faculties, its intimate connection with right conceptions of the operations of the divine mind,—that this conclusion cannot be established. And with the proof of this, which is all that the conditions of the argument require them to prove, men ought to be satisfied; as this is all that is needful to enable them to fall back again upon the simple belief of what the word of God so plainly teaches as a reality, while it affords us scarcely any materials for explaining or developing it. The objections and cavils of the enemies of truth should be disposed of in some way; but the conduct of the apostle, when he contented himself with disposing of an objection which was in substance and principle the same as this, merely by saying, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" * combines with the unsatisfactory character of many of the statements of those who have attempted directly to answer such objections in much greater detail, in impressing upon us the necessity of guarding against being led by the objections of adversaries into the minute discussion of matters which lie beyond the reach of our faculties,—with respect to which Scripture gives us little or no information,—and in the investigation of which, therefore, we can have no very firm ground to stand upon. Let us believe firmly,—because Scripture and reason concur in assuring us,—that every sinful action is a transgression of God's law, justly involving him that performs it in guilt and liability to punishment; and that its sinfulness proceeds wholly from the creature, and not from God, who cannot be the author or approver of sin; but let us also believe,—because Scripture and reason likewise concur in teaching us this,—that God's providence extends to and comprehends the sins of men, and is concerned in them by something more than a mere permission, and especially in directing and overruling them for accomplishing His own purposes of justice or of mercy; and let us become the less concerned about our inability to explain fully how it is that these doctrines can be shown to harmonize with each other, by remembering,—what is very manifest,—that the one grand difficulty into which all the difficulties attending our speculations upon religious subjects ulti-

* Rom. ix. 20.

mately run up or resolve themselves, and which attaches to every system, except atheism, is just to explain how it is that God and man, in consistency with their respective attributes, capacities, and circumstances, do, in fact, concur, combine, or co-operate in producing men's actions, and in determining men's fate.

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